MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER

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MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER

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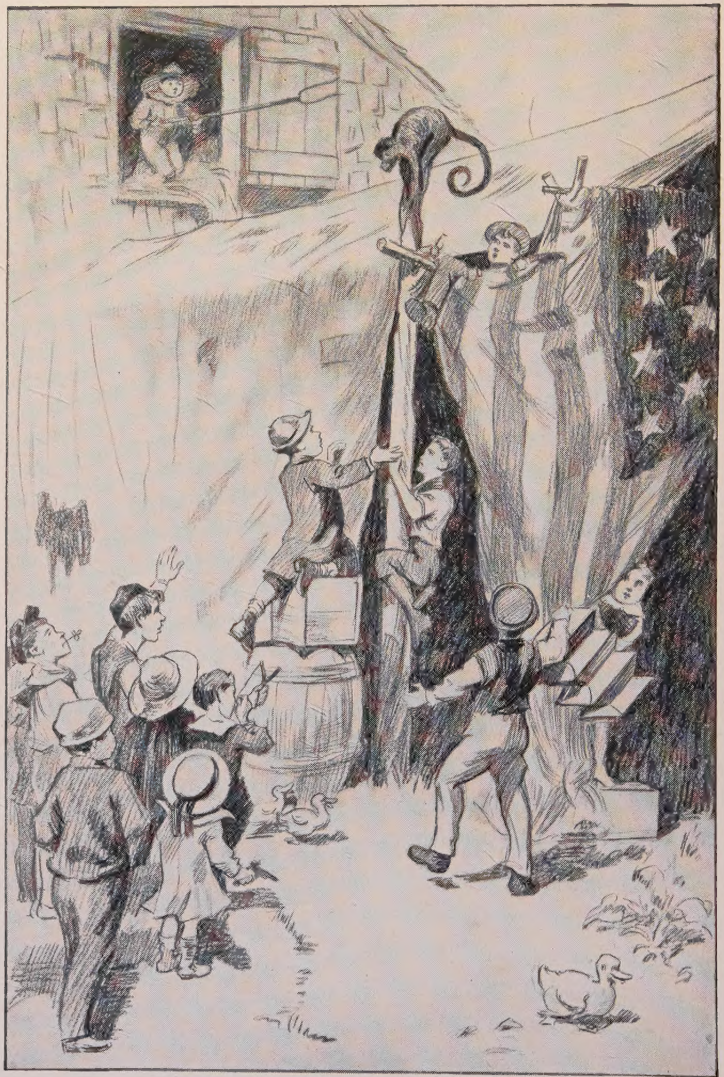

[See p. 205]

MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER MISBEHAVES HIMSELF

MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER

A Sequel to

"TOBY TYLER"

BY JAMES OTIS

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CHAPTER I

THE SCHEME

"WHY, we could start a circus jest as easy as a wink, Toby, 'cause you know all about one an' all you'd have to do would be to tell us fellers what to do, an' we'd 'tend to the rest."

"Yes; but you see we hain't got a tent, or hosses, or wagons, or nothin', an' I don't see how you could get a circus up that way;" and the speaker hugged his knees as he rocked himself to and fro in a musing way on the rather sharp point of a large rock, on which he had seated himself in order to hear what his companions had to say that was so important.

"Will you come down with me to Bob

Atwood's, an' see what he says about it?"

"Yes, I'll do that if you'll come out afterwards for a game of I-spy 'round the meetin'-house."

"All right; if we can find enough of the other fellers, I will."

Then the boys slipped down from the rocks, found the cows, and drove them home as the preface to their visit to Bob Atwood's.

The boy who was so anxious to start a circus was a little fellow with such a wonderful amount of remarkably red hair that he was seldom called anything but Reddy, although his name was known—by his parents, at least—to be Walter Grant. His companion was Toby Tyler, a boy who, a year before, had thought it would be a very pleasant thing to run away from his Uncle Daniel and the town of Guilford in order to be with a circus, and who, in ten weeks, was only too glad to run back home as rapidly as possible.

During the first few months of his return, very many brilliant offers had been made Toby by his companions to induce him to aid them in starting an amateur circus; but he had refused to have anything to do with the schemes, and for several reasons. During the ten weeks he had been away, he had seen quite as much of a circus life as he cared to see, without even such a mild dose as would be this amateur show; and, again, whenever he thought of the matter, the remembrance of the death of his monkey, Mr. Stubbs, would come upon him so vividly, and cause him so much sorrow, that he resolutely put the matter from his mind.

Now, however, it had been a year since the monkey was killed; school had closed during the summer season; and he was rather more disposed to listen to the requests of his friends.

On this particular night, Reddy Grant had offered to go with him for the cows—

an act of generosity which Toby accounted for only on the theory that Reddy wanted some of the strawberries which grew so plentifully in Uncle Daniel's pasture. But when they arrived there the strawberries were neglected for the circus question, and Toby then showed he was at least willing to talk about it.

There was no doubt that Bob Atwood knew Reddy was going to try to induce Toby to help start a circus, and Bob knew, also, that Reddy and Toby would visit him, although he appeared very much surprised when he saw them coming up the hill towards his house. He was at home, evidently waiting for something, at an hour when all the other boys were out playing; and that, in itself, would have made Toby suspicious if he had paid much attention to the matter.

Bob was perfectly willing to talk about a circus—so willing that, almost before Toby was aware of it, he was laying plans

with the others for such a show as could be given with the material at hand.

"You see we'd have to get a tent the first thing," said Toby, as he seated himself on the saw-horse as a sort of place of honor, and proceeded to give his companions the benefit of his experience in the circus line. "I s'pose we could get along without a fat woman, or a skeleton; but we'd have to have the tent anyway, so's folks couldn't look right in an' see the show for nothin'."

Reddy had decided some time before how that trifling matter could be arranged; and, as he went industriously to work making shavings out of a portion of a shingle, he said:

"I've got all that settled, Toby; an' when you say you're willin' to go ahead an' fix up the show, I'll be on hand with a tent that'll make your eyes stick out over a foot."

Bob nodded his head to show he was convinced Reddy could do just as he had promised; but Toby was anxious for more

particulars, and insisted on knowing where this very necessary portion of a circus was coming from.

"You see a tent is a big thing," he said seriously; an' it would cost more money than the fellers in this town could raise if they should pick all the strawberries in Uncle Dan'l's pasture."

"Oh, I don't say as the tent Reddy's got his eye on is a reg'lar one like a real circus has," said Bob slowly and candidly, as he began to draw on the side of the wood-shed a picture of what he probably intended should represent a horse; "but he knows how he can rig one up that'll be big enough, an' look stavin'."

With this information Toby was obliged to be satisfied; and with the view of learning more of the details, in case his companions had arranged for them, he asked:

"Where you goin' to get the company—the folks that ride, an' turn hand-springs, an' all them things?"

"Ben Cushing can turn twice as many hand-springs as any feller you ever saw, an' he can walk on his hands twice round the engine-house. I guess you couldn't find many circuses that could beat him, an' he's been practising in his barn all the chance he could get for more'n a week."

Without intending to do so, Bob had thus let the secret out that the scheme had already been talked up before Toby was consulted, and then there was no longer any reason for concealment.

"You see we thought we'd kinder get things fixed," said Reddy quickly, anxious to explain away the seeming deception he had been guilty of, "an' we wouldn't say anything to you till we knew whether we could get one up or not."

"An' we're goin' to ask three cents to come in; an' lots of the fellers have promised to buy tickets if we'll let 'em do some of the ridin', or else lead the hosses."

"But how are you goin' to get any

hosses?" asked Toby, thoroughly surprised at the way in which the scheme had already been developed.

"Reddy can get Jack Douglass's blind one, an' we can train him so's he'll go 'round the ring all right; an' your Uncle Dan'l will let you have his old white one that's lame, if you ask him. I ain't sure but I can get one of Chandler Merrill's ponies," continued Bob, now so excited by his subject that he left his picture while it was yet a three-legged horse, and stood in front of his friends; "an' if we could sell tickets enough, we could hire one of Rube Rowe's hosses for you to ride."

"An' Bob's goin' to be the clown, an' his mother's goin' to make him a suit of clothes out of one of his grandmother's curtains," added Reddy, as he snapped an imaginary whip with so many unnecessary flourishes that he tumbled over the saw-horse, thereby mixing a large quantity of sawdust in his brilliantly colored hair.

"An' Reddy's goin' to be ring-master," explained Bob, as he assisted his friend to rise, and acted the part of Good Samaritan by trying to get the sawdust from his hair with a curry-comb. "Joe Robinson says he'll sell tickets, an' 'tend the door, an' hold the hoops for you to jump through."

"Leander Leighton's goin' to be the band. He's got a pair of clappers; an' Mrs. Doak's goin' to show him how to play on the accordion with one finger, so's he'll know how to make an awful lot of noise," said Reddy, as he gave up the task of extracting the sawdust, and devoted his entire attention to the scheme.

"An' we can have some animals," said Bob, with the air of one who adds the crowning glory to some brilliant work.

Toby had been surprised at the resources of the town for a circus, of which he had not even dreamed; and at Bob's last remark he left his saw-horse seat as if to enable him to hear more distinctly.

"Yes," continued Bob, "we can get a good many of some kinds. Old Mrs. Simpson has got a three-legged cat with four kittens, an' Ben Cushing has got a hen that crows; an' we can take my calf for a grizzly bear, an' Jack Havener's two lambs for white bears. I've caught six mice, an' I'll have more'n a dozen before the show comes off; an' Reddy's goin' to bring his cat that ain't got any tail. Leander Leighton's goin' to bring four of his rabbits an' make believe they're wolves; an' Joe Robinson's goin' to catch all the squirrels he can—we'll have the largest for foxes, an' the smallest for hyenas; an' Joe'll keep howlin' while he's tendin' the door, so's to make 'em sound right."

"Bob's sister's goin' to show him how to sing a couple of songs, an' he's goin' to write 'em out on paper so's to have a book to sell," added Reddy, delighted at the surprise expressed in Toby's face. "Nahum Baker says if we have any kind of a show he'll bring up some lemonade an' some pies to

sell, an' pass 'em 'round jest as they do in a reg'lar circus."

This last information was indeed surprising, for, inasmuch as Nahum Baker was a man who had an apology for a fruit-store near the wharves, it lent an air of realism to the plan, this having a grown man connected with them in the enterprise.

"But he mustn't get any of the boys to help him, an' then treat them as Job Lord did me," said Toby earnestly, the scheme having grown so in the half-hour that he began to fear it might be too much like the circus with which he had spent ten of the longest and most dreary weeks he had ever known.

"I'll look out for that," said Bob confidently. "If he tries any of them games we'll make him leave, no matter how good a trade he's doin'."

"Now, where we goin' to have the show?" and from the way Toby asked the question it was easily seen that he had de-

cided to accept the position of manager which had been so delicately offered him.

"That's jest what we ain't fixed about," said Bob, as if he blamed himself severely for not having already attended to this portion of the business. "You see, if your Uncle Dan'l would let us have it up by his barn that would be jest the place, an' I almost know he'd say yes if you asked him."

"Do you s'pose it would be big enough? You know when there's a circus in town everybody comes from all around to see it, an' it wouldn't do to have a place where they couldn't all get in," and Toby spoke as if there could be no doubt as to the crowds that would collect to see this wonderful show of theirs.

"It'll have to be big enough, if we use the tent I'm goin' to get," said Reddy decidedly; "for you see that won't be so awful large, an' it would make it look kinder small if we put it where the other circuses put theirs."

"Well, then, I s'pose we'll have to make that do, an' we can have two or three shows if there are too many to come in at one time," said Toby in a satisfied way that matters could be arranged so easily; and then, with a big sigh, he added, "If only Mr. Stubbs hadn't got killed, what a show we could have! I never saw him ride; but I know he could have done better than any one else that ever tried it, if he wanted to, an' if we had him we could have a reg'lar circus without anybody else."

Then the boys bewailed the untimely fate of Mr. Stubbs, until they saw that Toby was fast getting into a mood altogether too sad for the proper transaction of circus business, and Bob proposed that a visit be paid Ben Cushing, for the purpose of having him give them a private exhibition of his skill, in order that Toby might see some of the talent which was to help make their circus a glorious success.

Chapter II

THE BLIND HORSE

REDDY had laid his plans so well that all the intending partners were where they could easily be found on this evening when Toby's consent was to be won, and Ben Cushing was no exception. On the hard, uneven floor of his father's barn, with all his clothes discarded save his trousers and shirt, he was making such heroic efforts in the way of practice, that while the boys were yet some distance from the building they could hear the thud of Ben's head or heels as he unexpectedly came in contact with the floor.

When the three visitors stood at the door and looked in, Ben professed to be unaware of their presence, and began a series of hand-springs that might have been won-

derful, if he had not miscalculated the distance, and struck the side of the barn just as he was getting well into the work.

Then, having lost his opportunity of dazzling them by showing that even when he was alone he could turn any number of hand-springs simply in the way of exercise, he suddenly became aware of their presence, and greeted his friends with the anxiously asked question as to what Toby had decided to do about entering the circus business.

Bob and Reddy, instead of answering, waited for Toby to speak; it was a good opportunity to have the important matter settled definitely, and they listened anxiously for his decision.

"I'm goin' into it," said Toby after a pause, during which it appeared as if he were trying to make up his mind, "'cause it seems as if you had it almost done now. You know when I got home last summer I didn't ever want to hear of a circus or

see one, for I'd had about enough of them, an' then I'd think of poor Mr. Stubbs, an' that would make me feel awful bad. I didn't think, either, that we could get up such a good show; but now you fellers have got so much done towards it, I think we'd better go ahead—though I do wish Mr. Stubbs was alive, an' we had a skeleton an' a fat woman."

Reddy Grant cheered very loudly as a means of showing how delighted he was at thus having finally enlisted Toby in the scheme, and Bob, as proof of the high esteem in which all the projectors of the enterprise held this famous circus-rider, said:

"Now you know all about circuses, Toby, an' you shall be the chief boss of this one, an' we'll do just what you say."

Toby almost blushed as this great honor was actually thrust upon him, and he hardly knew what reply to make, when Ben ceased his acrobatic exercises, and, with

Bobby and Reddy, stood waiting for him to give his orders.

"I s'pose the first thing to do," he said at length, "is to see if Jack Douglass is willin' for us to have his hoss, an' then find out what Uncle Dan'l says about it. If we don't get the hoss, it won't be any use to say anything to Uncle Dan'l."

Reddy was so anxious to have matters settled at once that he offered to go up to Mr. Douglass's house then, if the others would wait there for his return, which proposition was at once accepted.

Mr. Douglass was an old colored man who lived fully half a mile from the village; but Reddy's eagerness caused quick travelling, and in a surprisingly short time he was back breathless and happy. The coveted horse was to be theirs for as long a time as they wanted him, provided they fed him well, and did not attempt to harness him into a wagon.

The owner of the sightless animal had

expressed his doubts as to whether he would ever make much of a circus-horse, owing to his lack of sight and his extreme age; but he argued that if, as was very probable, the animal fell while being ridden, he would hurt his rider quite as much as himself, and therefore the experiment would not be tried so often as seriously to injure the steed.

It only remained to consult Uncle Daniel on the matter, and of course that was to be attended to by Toby. He would have waited until a fitting opportunity presented itself; but his companions insisted so strongly, that he went home at once to have the case decided.

Uncle Daniel was seated by the window as usual, looking out over the distant hills as if he were trying to peer in at the gates of that city where so many loved ones awaited him, and it was some moments before Toby could make him understand what it was he was trying to say.

"So ye didn't get circusin' enough last summer?" asked the old gentleman, when at last he realized what it was the boy was talking about.

"Oh yes, I did!" replied Toby, quickly; "but you see that was a real one, an' this of ours is only a little make-believe for three cents. We want to get you to let us have the lot between the barn an' the road to put our tent on, an' then lend us old Whitey. We're goin' to have Jack Douglass's hoss that's blind, an' we've got a three-legged cat, an' one without any tail, an' lots of things."

"It's a kind of a cripples' circus, eh? Well, Toby boy, you can do as you want to, an' you shall have old Whitey; but it seems to me you'd better tie her lame leg on, or she'll shake it off when you get to makin' her cut up antics."

Then Uncle Daniel returned to his reverie, and the show was thus decided upon, the projectors going again to view the tri-

angular piece of land so soon to be decorated with their tents and circus belongings.

Each hour that passed after Toby had decided, with Uncle Daniel's consent, to go into the circus business made him more eager to carry out the brilliant plan that had been unfolded by Bob Atwood and Reddy Grant, until his brain was in a perfect whirl when he went to bed that night. He was sure he could ride as well as when he was under Mr. Castle's rather severe training, and he thought over and over again how he would surprise every one who knew him; but he did not stop to think that there might be a difference between the horse he had ridden in the circus and the lame one of Uncle Daniel's, or the blind one belonging to Mr. Douglass. He had an idea that it all depended upon himself, with very little reference to the animal, and he was sure he had his lesson perfectly.

Early as he got up the next morning, his

partners in the enterprise were waiting for him just around the corner of the barn, where he found them as he went for the cows, and they walked to the pasture with him in order to discuss the matter.

Ben Cushing was in light-marching and acrobatic costume, worn for the occasion in order to give a full exhibition of his skill; and Reddy had been up so long that he had had time to procure Mr. Douglass's wonderful steed, which he had already led to the pasture so that he could be experimented upon.

"I thought I'd get him up there," he said to Toby, "so's you could try him; 'cause if we don't get money enough to hire one of Rube Rowe, you'll have to ride the blind one or the lame one, an' you'd better find out which you want. If you try him in the pasture the fellers won't see you; but if you did it down by your house, every one of 'em would huddle 'round."

Toby thought the general idea was a

good one; but he was just a trifle uncertain as to how the blind horse would get along on such uneven ground. However, he said nothing, lest his companions should think he was afraid to make the attempt; and when Ben and Bob proceeded to mark out a ring, he advised them as to its size.

The most level piece of ground that could be found was selected as the place for the trial, but several small mounds prevented it from being all a circus-rider could ask for.

Bob volunteered to lead the horse around the track several times, hoping he would become so accustomed to it as to be able to go by himself after a while; and Toby made his preparations by laying his hat on the ground with a stone on it, so that he should be sure to find it when his rehearsal was done.

It was a warm job Bob had undertaken, this leading the blind animal along the ill-defined line that marked the limits of the

ring, for the sun shone brightly, and there were no friendly trees to lend a shelter; but he paid no attention to his discomfort because of the fact that he was doing something towards the enterprise which was to bring them in both honor and money.

The poor old horse was the least interested of the party, and he stumbled around the circle in an abused sort of way, as if he considered it a piece of gross injustice to force him on the weary round when the grass was so plentiful and tender just under his feet.

Ben was busily engaged in lengthening Mr. Douglass's rather weak and aged bridle with a small piece of rope, and from time to time he encouraged the ambitious clown in his labor.

"Keep it up, if it is hot!" he shouted; "an' when we get him so's he can do it alone, he'll be jest as good a circus-hoss as anybody would want, for we can stuff him

with hay an' grass till he's fat," and Ben looked at the clearly defined ribs in a critical way, as if trying to decide how much food would be necessary to cover them with flesh.

"Oh, I can keep on as long as the hoss can," said Bob, as he wiped the perspiration from his face with one hand, and clung firmly to the forelock of the animal with the other; "but we've been round here as many as six times already, an' he don't seem to know the way any better than when we started."

"Oh yes, he does," cried Reddy, who was practising for his duties as ring-master, anxious that his education should advance as fast as the horse's did; "he's got so he knows enough to turn out for that second knoll, though he does stumble a little over the first one."

By this time Ben had the bridle adjusted to suit him, Toby was ready to make his first attempt at riding since he left the cir-

cus, and the more serious work was begun.

Ben bridled the horse after some difficulty, Reddy drew out from its hiding-place a whip made by tying a piece of cod-line to an alder branch, and Toby was about to mount, when Joe Robinson came in sight.

He had been running at full speed, and was nearly breathless; but he managed to cry out so that he could be understood after considerable difficulty:

"Hold on! don't go to ridin' till after we get some hoops for you to jump through."

"I guess I won't try any jumpin' till after I see how he goes," said Toby as he looked rather doubtfully first at the horse's weak legs, and then at his sharp back; "besides, we can't use the hoops till he gets more used to the ring."

Joe threw himself on the ground as if he felt quite as much aggrieved because he was thus left out of the programme as the horse apparently did because he was in it, and Bob consoled him by explaining that

he had no reason to feel slighted, since he, who, as the clown, was to be the life of the entertainment, could take no other part in these preparatory steps than to lead a blind horse around a still blinder ring.

"Hold him while I get on," said Toby as he clutched the mane and a portion of the prominent backbone, drawing himself up at some risk of upsetting the rather shaky steed.

But there was no necessity of his giving this order, for, although four boys sprang to do his bidding, the weary horse remained as motionless as a statue, save for his hard breathing which proclaimed the fact that the "heaves" had long since singled him out as a victim.

Toby succeeded in getting on the animal's back after some exertion; but he found standing there an entirely different matter from standing on the broad saddles that were used in the circus, and the boy and the horse made a shaky-looking pair.

"Shall I start him?" asked Bob, while Reddy stood as near the centre of the ring as he could get, prepared to snap his cod-line whip at the first signal.

Toby hesitated a moment; he knew that to attempt to stand upon, or on either side of, that prominent backbone, after its owner was in motion, would be simply to invite his own downfall; and he said, as he seated himself carefully astride the bone:

"Let him walk around once till I see how he goes."

Reddy cracked his whip without producing any effect upon the patient steed, but, after much coaxing, Bob succeeded in starting him again, while Toby bounced up and down much like a kernel of corn on a griddle, such a decided motion did the horse have.

"He won't ever do for a ridin' hoss," said Toby with much difficulty, when he was half-way around the circle, "'cause you see his bones is so sharp that he feels

as if he was comin' to pieces every time he steps."

"Jest get him to trottin' once, an' then you can tell what he's good for," suggested Reddy, anxious to try the effect of his whip; and, without waiting for the rider's permission, he lashed the unfortunate animal with the cod-line until he succeeded in rousing him thoroughly.

It was in vain Toby begged him to stop, and Bob shouted that such a course was not the proper one for a ring-master to pursue. Reddy was determined the rider should have an opportunity of trying the horse under full speed, and the result was that the animal broke loose from Bob's guiding hand, rushing out of the imaginary ring into the centre of the pasture at a rate of speed that would have surprised and frightened Mr. Douglass had he been there to see it.

Shaken first up, then down, and from one side to the other, Toby stretched himself

out at full length, clasping the horse around the neck as the patched bridle broke, and shouting "Whoa!" at the full strength of his lungs.

After running fully fifty yards, until it seemed to Toby that his head and his body had been pounded into one, the horse stopped, leaned one heel up against the other, and stood as if dreamily asking whether they wanted any more circus out of him.

"Couldn't anybody ride him, he jolts so," said Toby to his partners, as they came running up to where he stood trying to find out whether or not his tongue was bleeding, and fearing it was, because his teeth had been pounded down on it so hard two or three times. "You see, in the circus they had big, wide saddles, an' the hosses didn't go anything like him."

"Well, we can fix a saddle," said Bob, thoughtfully; "but I don't know as we could do anything to the hoss."

"Perhaps old Whitey'll go better, 'cause she's lame," suggested Reddy, feeling that considerable credit was due him for having made it possible to test the animal's qualities in so short a time.

"I wouldn't wonder if this one would be all right when he gets a saddle on an' is trained," said Joe, and then he added, quickly, "I hain't got anything more to do to-day, an' I'll stay up here an' train him."

The partners were only too glad to accept this offer; and while Joe led the horse back to the supposed ring, Ben gave a partial exhibition of his acrobatic feats, omitting the most difficult, owing to the uneven surface of the land.

Then the partners retired to the shade of some alder bushes, where they could fight mosquitoes and talk over their plans at the same time, while Joe was perspiring in his self-imposed task of educating the blind horse.

Chapter III

Abner Bolton

"NOW I'll see about makin' the saddle," said Bob, "'cause I've seen 'em a good many times in a circus, an' I know jest how they're made. While I'm doin' that you fellers must be fixin' 'bout who else we'll have in the show. Leander Leighton will come up here to-morrow, so's we can hear how he plays, an' we must have everything fixed by then."

"Why didn't he come to-day?" asked Ben, thinking that all the members of the firm should have been present at this first rehearsal.

"Well, you see, he had to split some wood, an' he had to take care of the baby. I offered to help him with the wood; but he said he couldn't get away any quicker

if I did, for just as soon as the baby saw another feller waitin' 'round, she'd yell so awful hard he'd have to stay in all day."

This explanation as to the absence of the band appeared to be perfectly satisfactory to those present, and they began to discuss the merits of certain of their companions in order to decide upon the proper ones to enlist as members, since the number of their performers was not so large as they thought it should be in a show where an admission fee of three cents was to be charged.

Just as they were getting well into their discussion, and, of course, speaking of such matters as managers should keep a profound secret from the public, Bob cried out:

"There comes Abner Bolton! He's always runnin' 'round where he hain't wanted; an' I wonder how he come to know we was here? I'll send him off mighty quick now, you see."

The boy who had disturbed Bob so greatly was so near when he was first discovered that by the time the threat had been uttered he was close upon them. He was a small boy, not more than eight years old, and hardly as large as a boy of six should be; he walked on crutches because of his deformed legs, which hung withered and useless, barely capable of supporting his slight weight.

"Now, what do *you* want?" asked Bob, in an angry tone.

"I don't want anything," was the mild reply, as the cripple halted just outside the shade, as if not daring to come any farther until invited. "I heard you was goin' to get up a circus, an' I thought perhaps you'd let me watch you, 'cause I wouldn't bother you any."

"You would bother us, an' you can't stay 'round here, for we hain't goin' to have anybody watchin' us. You may come to the show if you can get three cents."

"I don't s'pose I could do that," said the boy, looking longingly towards the shade, but still standing in the sun. "I don't have any chance to get money, an' I do wish you boys would let me stay where you are, for it's so awful lonesome out to the poor-farm, an' I can't run around as you can."

"Well, you can't stay here, an' the sooner you go back to the village the better we'll like it, for we don't want anybody to know what we're talkin' about."

Toby had attempted to speak once or twice while Bob was engaged with the cripple from the poor-farm; but he did not get an opportunity until Abner turned to go away, looking thoroughly sad and disheartened.

"Don't go, Abner, but come and set down here where it's cool, an' perhaps we can fix it for you."

The cripple turned as Toby spoke, and the look which came into his face went right to the heart of the boy, who for ten

long weeks had known what it was to be almost entirely without a friend.

"I don't see what you want him 'round here for," said Bob, petulantly, as Abner seated himself by Toby's side, thoroughly exhausted by his long walk. "He can't do nothin'; an' if he could, we don't want no fellers from the poor-farm mixed up with the show."

"It don't make any difference if he does live to the poor-farm," said Toby, as he put his little brown hand on Abner's thin fingers. "He has to stay there 'cause his father and mother's dead, an' perhaps I'd been there, 'cept for Uncle Dan'l. If I'd thought before about his bein' lonesome an' not bein' able to play like the rest of us, I'd gone out to see him; an' now we do know it we'll let him stay with us, an' perhaps he can do something in the circus."

"The fellers will laugh at us, an' say we're runnin' a poorhouse show," replied Bob, sulkily.

"Well, let 'em laugh; we'll feel a good deal better'n they do, 'cause we'll know we're tryin' to let a little feller have some fun what don't get many chances;" and, in his excitement, Toby spoke so loudly that Joe came running up to see what was the matter.

"Let him stay 'round here to-day, 'cause we've got all through practisin', an' then tell him to keep away," said Ben, thinking this idea a very generous one.

"He can belong to the show jest as well as not; an' if you fellers will let him, I'll give you my part of all the money we make."

This proposition of Toby's put the matter on a very different basis, and both Ben and Bob now looked favorably inclined towards it.

"Don't you do that, Toby," said Abner, his eyes filling with tears because of the kindness shown him. "I'll go right away,

an' I won't come into the village again to bother you."

"You shall come into the village every day, Abner, an' you won't bother us at all, for you shall go 'long of me everywhere I do, an' I won't never walk any faster'n you can;" and Toby moved his seat nearer Abner, to show that he took him under his especial care.

"He might help tend the door," said Joe, kindly, anxious to please Toby, "an' that'll give me a chance to do more howlin' for the hyenas, 'cause that'll be 'bout all I oughter do if I have to hold the hoops."

"Yes, he can do that," and Toby was very eager now, "an' we can get him a stool to sit on, an' he can do jest as much as if he could stand up."

By this time Bob and Ben had decided that, in consideration of Toby's offer, Abner should be counted as one of the company, and the matters under discussion that

had been interrupted by the cripple's coming were again taken up.

Owing to the possible chance that Joe could not succeed in training the blind horse sufficiently to make him useful in the ring, it was necessary to know just what animals they could procure, and Bob offered to see Chandler Merrill for the purpose of securing the services of his Mexican pony, who had never allowed any one to ride him without first having a severe battle.

"We can train him down all right," said Bob; "an' you fellers come down now while I find out 'bout the pony, so's we can come back here after dinner."

As it was very important that this matter should be settled as soon as possible, Bob's advice was acted upon; and as the boys started to go, Toby said:

"Come, Abner, you come home with me an' get some dinner, an' then you can come back here when I do."

Bob was disposed to make sport of this sudden friendship; but Toby paid no attention to what he said, and if any of them wanted to talk with him, they too were obliged to walk with the boy from the poor-farm.

By the time they arrived at Uncle Daniel's, Toby had formed many plans for making the life of the homeless boy more cheerful than it ever had been.

Chapter IV

THE PONY

TOBY'S interest in the crippled boy whom he had taken under his charge was considerably greater than in the contemplated circus; and both Bob and Ben felt angry and injured when, in the midst of some brilliant plan for startling those of the good people of Guilford who should come to their circus, Toby would stop to say something to Abner, who was hobbling along as fast as possible in order that he might not oblige the party to wait for him.

For a number of years Toby had known that there was a crippled orphan at the poor-farm; but it so happened that he had not met him very often, and even then he had no idea of the lonely life the boy was obliged to lead.

On the way to the village he had formed several plans by which he might aid Abner; but none of them could be put into operation until after he had consulted Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive.

It was nearly noon, and the understanding was that each one should get his dinner and go to the pasture again, when it would be known whether they were to be able to number Chandler Merrill's pony among the attractions of their show, or be wholly dependent upon the disabled horses that as yet made up their collection.

"You're comin' to get dinner with me, Abner," said Toby, as he stopped in front of Uncle Daniel's gate, while the little fellow was continuing on his way to the only place he could call home, there to get his dinner with the other paupers.

"I'm afraid your aunt won't want me," he said, shyly, while it was plain to be seen that he would be more than well pleased to accept the invitation.

"Aunt Olive won't care a bit, an' she'll be glad to have you, I know, 'cause she says it always does her good to see hungry people eat, though if that's so I must have done her an awful sight of good lots of times, for it don't seem to me I ever set down to the table in my life but what I was awful hungry. Come on now, so's we'll have time to get our hands an' faces washed before the dinner-bell rings."

Abner followed Toby in a hesitating way, much as if he expected each moment to be ordered back; and when they arrived at the door he stood on the threshold, not daring to enter until permission had been given.

"This is Abner Bolton, Uncle Dan'l," said Toby, as he saw that his newly made friend would not come in without an invitation from some one besides himself. "He lives out to the poor-farm, an' he don't have any such nice home as I've got, so I

thought you wouldn't care if I brought him in to dinner."

"You've got a good heart, Toby, boy, and the Lord will reward you for it," said Uncle Daniel, as he stroked the boy's refractory hair; and then he said to Abner, "Come in, my lad, and share Toby's dinner, nor need you ever hesitate about accepting any such invitation when it leads you here."

Then Aunt Olive greeted Abner so kindly that the poor boy hardly knew whether it was reality or a dream, so strange was it all to him.

During the dinner Toby told of the difficulty he had had in getting his partners to consent to Abner's being one of the company, and Aunt Olive, who had shown considerable interest in the circus scheme, said:

"Why don't you let him keep a stand, and then he can make some money for himself. I will bake him a lot of doughnuts

and ginger-snaps, and your Uncle Dan'l will lend him money enough to buy lemons an' sugar. It will be a deal better than to have Nahum Baker there with his pies that are as heavy as lead, an' doughnuts that have soaked up all the fat in the pan."

Toby was delighted with the plan, and Abner's eyes glistened at the mere idea that it might be possible for him to do, once in his life at least, as did other and more fortunate boys.

It certainly seemed, when they arrived at the pasture again, as if everything was conspiring in favor of their circus, for Chandler Merrill had willingly consented to let them use his pony; but he had done so with the kindly prophecy that the little animal would "kick their brains out" if they were not careful with him.

In order to make sure that the consent would not be withdrawn, and at the same time to prove that he told the truth, Bob had brought the pony with him, and, judg-

ing from his general appearance as he stood gazing suspiciously at the Douglass horse, he deserved all that was said of him regarding his vicious qualities. He was about half the size of an ordinary horse, and his coat was ragged-looking, owing to its having been rubbed off in spots, thus giving him the air of just such a pony as one would suppose willing to join a party of boys in starting a circus.

"Now, there's a hoss that hain't either lame or blind," said Bob, proudly, as he led the pony once around the ring to show his partners how he stepped. If he was intending to say anything more, he concluded to defer it while he made some very rapid movements in order to escape the blow the "hoss" aimed at him with his hind-feet.

"Kicks, don't he?" said Toby, in a tone which plainly told he did not think him very well suited to their purpose.

"Well, he did then," and Bob fastened the halter more securely by putting one end

of the rope through the pony's mouth; "but you see that's 'cause he hain't been used much, an' he's tickled 'cause he's goin' to belong to a circus."

"How long before he'll get over bein' tickled?" asked Joe. "I'm willin' to train Jack Douglass's hoss; but I don't know 'bout this one till he gets sorry enough not to kick."

"Oh, he'll be all right jest as soon as Toby rides him 'round the ring a little while."

"Do you think I'm goin' to ride him?" asked Toby, beginning to believe his partners expected more of him than ever Mr. Castle did.

"Of course; a feller what's been with a circus ought to know how to ride any hoss that ever lived," replied Bob, with considerable emphasis, owing to the fact that the pony kicked and plunged so that his words were jerked out of him, rather than spoken.

"I s'pose some fellers can; but I wasn't

with the circus long enough to find out how to ride such hosses as them," and Toby retired to the shade of the alder bushes, where Abner was sitting to wait until Bob and the pony had come to terms.

It was quite as much as Bob could do to hold his prize, without trying to make any arrangements for having him ridden, and he called Reddy to help him.

Now, as the ring-master of the contemplated circus, Reddy ought to have known all about horses, and he thought he did until the pony made one plunge, just as he came up smiling with whip in hand. Then he said, as he ran towards Toby:

"I don't believe I want to be ring-master if we're goin' to have that hoss."

"Here, Joe, you help me," cried Bob, in desperation, growing each moment more afraid of the steed. "I want to get him up by the fence, where we can hitch him, till we find out what to do with him."

Joe was perfectly willing to assist the

unfortunate clown in his troubles; but, as he started towards him, the pony wheeled and flung his heels out with a force that showed he would do some damage if he could, and Joe also joined the party among the bushes.

Bob was thus left alone with his prize, and a most uncomfortable time he appeared to be having of it, standing there in the hot sun clinging desperately to the halter, and jumping from one side to the other when the pony attempted to bite, or strike him with his fore-feet.

"Let him go; he hain't any good," shouted Reddy from his secure retreat.

"If I let go the halter, he'll jump right at me," and there was a certain ring in Bob's voice that told he was afraid.

"Hitch him to the fence, an' then climb over," suggested Joe.

"But I can't get him over there, for he won't go a step," and Bob continued to hold

fast to the halter, afraid to do so, but still more afraid to let go.

He had borrowed the pony; but it certainly seemed as if the animal had borrowed him, for his fear caused him to cling desperately to the halter as the only possible means of saving his life.

The boys under the alder bushes were fully alive to the fact that something should be done although they were undecided as to what that something should be.

Joe proposed that they all rush out and scare the pony away, but Bob insisted that he would be the sufferer by such a course. Reddy thought if Bob should show more spirit, and let the vicious little animal see that he was not afraid of him, everything would be all right; but when it was proposed that he try the plan himself, he concluded, perhaps, there might be serious objections to such a course.

Ben thought if all of them got hold of

the halter, they could pull the pony to the fence, and this plan was looked upon with such favor that it was adopted at once.

Every one, except Abner, took hold of the halter, after some little delay in getting there, owing to the readiness of the pony to use his heels at the slightest provocation; and, just when they were about to put forth all their strength in pulling, the pony jumped towards them suddenly, rendering their efforts useless, and starting all, save Bob, back to the alder bushes in ignominious flight.

Bob still remained at his post, or, more correctly speaking, the halter, and it was very much against his will that he did so.

"I wish Chandler Merrill would come up here an' get his old hoss, for I don't want him any longer," he said, angrily. "He ought to be prosecuted for lettin' us have such a old tiger."

Bob did not seem to remember that, if he had refused the loan of the pony, he

would have considered Chandler Merrill very selfish; in fact, he hardly remembered anything save his own desire to get rid of the animal, and as quickly as possible.

"What shall I do?" he cried, in desperation. "I can't stand here all day, an' the hoss don't mean to let me get away."

"We've got to help Bob," said Toby, decidedly, as he arose to his feet again, and went towards the unfortunate clown. "If you fellers will try to hold him, I'll get on his back, an' then Bob can get away."

"But he'll throw you off, an' hurt you," objected Abner, trying to prevent his newly made friend from going.

"I can stop him from doing that, an' it's the only way I know of to help Bob."

"You get on, Toby, an' then I'll scoot jest as soon as you get hold of the halter," said Bob, happy at this prospect of being relieved. "Then, when you get a chance, you jump off, an' we'll let somebody else take him home."

It was a hard task, and they all ran considerable risk of getting kicked; but at last it was accomplished, so far as mounting was concerned. Toby was on the pony's back with a firm grasp of the rope that was made to serve as bridle.

"Now, be all ready to run," he said; and there was no disposition to linger shown by any of his friends.

"Let go!" he shouted, and at the sound of his voice the boys went one way and the pony another at full speed.

It was not until the would-be circus managers were within the shelter of the clump of bushes that they stopped to look for their partner, and then they saw him at the further end of the pasture, the pony running and leaping as if doing his best to dislodge his rider.

Even the Douglass horse seemed to be excited by the display of spirit, for he capered around in a manner very unbecoming one as old and blind as he.

Only for a few moments could they watch the contest, and then the distant trees hid Toby Tyler and Chandler Merrill's pony from view

Chapter V

OLD BEN

SOME time the boys watched for Toby's return, and just as they were beginning to think they ought to go in search of him, and fearing lest he had been hurt by the vicious pony, they saw him coming from among the trees, alone and on foot.

"Well," said Bob, with a sigh of relief, "he's got rid of the hoss, an' that was all we wanted."

Toby's story, when at last, hot and tired, he reached the alder bushes, was not nearly so exciting as his partners anticipated. He had clung to the pony until they entered the woods, where he was brushed off by the branches of the trees as easily as if he had been a fly, and with as little damage.

How they should get the pony back into

its owner's keeping was a question difficult to answer, and they were all so completely worn out by their exertions to get rid of him that they did not attempt to come to any conclusion regarding it.

While they were resting from their labors, and before they had ceased to congratulate each other that they had succeeded in separating themselves from the pony, Leander Leighton, his accordion under his arm and his clappers in his hand, made his appearance.

His struggle with the baby had evidently come to an end sooner than he had dared hope, and the managers were happy at this speedy prospect of hearing what their band could do in the way of music.

"Boys!" shouted Leander, excitedly, while he was some distance away, "there's a real circus comin' here next week—the same one Toby Tyler run away with—an' the men are pastin' up the bills now, down to the village!"

The boys looked at each other in surprise; it had never entered into their calculations that they might have a real circus as a rival, and certainly Toby had never thought he would again see those whom he had first run away with and then run away from. He was rather disturbed by the prospect at first, for it seemed certain that Job Lord and Mr. Castle would try to compel him to go with them; but a moment's thought convinced him that Uncle Daniel would not allow them to carry him away, and he grew as eager for more news as any of the others.

Leander knew no more than he had already told; after having been relieved from his care of the baby, he had started for the pasture, and had seen the show-bills as he came along. He was certain it was the same circus Toby had gone with, for the names on the bills were the same, and he had heard some of the townspeople say so as he came along.

"An' I shall see the skeleton an' the fat woman again," said Toby, delighted at the idea of meeting those kind friends from whom he had thought himself parted with forever.

"Don't you s'pose you could get 'em to leave that show an' come with ours?" asked Bob, thinking perhaps some kind fortune had thrown this opportunity in their way that they might the better succeed in their project.

Toby was not sure such a plan could be made to work, for the reason that they were only intending to give two or three performances, and Mr. and Mrs. Treat might not think it worth their while to leave the circus they were with on the strength of such uncertain prospects.

"And you shall go to the show, Abner," said Toby, pleased at the opportunity he would have of making the crippled boy happy for one day at least; "an' I'll take all of you fellers down, an' get the skeleton

to talk at you, so's you can see how nice he is. You shall see his wife, an' old Ben, an' Ella, an'—"

"But won't you be afraid of Job Lord?" interrupted Leander, fearful lest Toby's dread of meeting his old employer might prevent them from having all this promised enjoyment.

"Uncle Dan'l wouldn't let him take me away, an' now I'm home here I don't believe old Ben would let him touch me."

There was evidently no probability that they would transact any more business relative to their own circus that day, so intent were they on talking about the one that was to come, and it was not until nearly time to drive the cows home that they remembered the presence of their band.

Ben proposed that Leander should show them what he could do in the way of music, so that he need not be at the trouble of bringing his accordion up into the pasture again, and the boys ceased all conversation

for the purpose of listening to the so-called melody.

After considerable preparation in the way of polishing his clappers on the cuff of his jacket and fingering the keys of his accordion to make sure they were in proper working order, Leander extracted with one finger a few bars of "Yankee Doodle" from the last-named instrument, and gave an imitation of a drum with the clappers, in a manner that won for him no small amount of applause.

"Now, we'll go home," said Toby, "'cause Uncle Dan'l will be waitin' for me an' the cows, an' to-morrow I'll meet you down-town where the circus pictures be."

Then he helped Abner on to his crutches, and walked beside him all the way, wishing, oh, *so* much! that he could save the poor boy from having to go out to the poor-farm to sleep.

"You come in just as early as you can in the mornin', Abner, an' you shall eat din-

ner with me," he said, as he parted with the boy at Uncle Daniel's gate, "an' perhaps you'll make so much money at our circus that you won't ever have to go out to the poor-farm again."

Abner tried to thank his friend for the kindness he had shown him; but the sobs of gratitude came into his throat so fast that it was impossible, and he hobbled away towards his dreary home, while Toby ran into the house to tell the astounding news of the coming of the circus.

"So all the people who were so kind to you will be here next week, will they?" said, rather than asked, Aunt Olive. "Well, Toby, we'll kill one of the lambs, an' you shall invite them up here to dinner, which will kind of encourage them to be good to any other little boy who may be as foolish as you were."

Toby lay awake a long time that night, thinking of the pleasure he was to have in seeing Mr. and Mrs. Treat, old Ben and

little Ella, eating dinner in Uncle Daniel's home, and of how good a boy he ought to be to repay his uncle and aunt for their loving-kindness to him.

Operations were almost entirely suspended by the would-be circus managers in view of the coming of the real show. It would have been commercial folly to attempt to enter into competition with it; the real circus would, without a doubt, prove too strong a rival for them to contend against; and by waiting until after it had come and gone they might be able to pick up some useful ideas regarding the show they proposed to give.

This delay would be to their advantage in a great many other ways. The band would have so much time for practice that he might learn another tune, or even be able to play with more than one finger; their acrobat would have so many rehearsals that he could, perhaps, double his present allowance of hand-springs, and Joe

would be able to bring his horses to a more perfect state of training.

Mr. Douglass, having no use for his horse, was perfectly willing he should remain under Joe's tuition, providing it was done in Uncle Daniel's pasture; but matters were not in so good a condition regarding the pony.

Chandler Merrill was anxious to have his property returned to him, and not willing to go after it. Besides, Mr. Douglass's horse was in great danger of being kicked to death so long as the vicious little animal remained in the same pasture.

Very many were the discussions the boys had on the subject; but nothing could be suggested which promised any relief, after Bob's brilliant idea of driving the pony out, and letting him find his way home as best he might, was tried without success. The pony not only refused to go out, but he actually drove the boys away by the liberal use he made of his heels.

Slowly the time passed until the day before the one on which the circus was to arrive. Toby had almost been counting the hours and Abner, who was to see the interior of a circus tent for the first time in his life, was quite as excited as he.

The lamb had been killed as Aunt Olive had promised, and a rare store of good things in the way of apple-pies, cake, doughnuts, and custards had been prepared, until the pantry looked like a large-sized baker's shop just opened for inspection.

Everything was ready for the guests, who were to be invited to dinner next day; and when Toby went to bed that night, it seemed as if he would never get to sleep for thinking of all the friends he was to see.

Abner was in quite as sleepless a condition as Toby; Aunt Olive had invited him to remain overnight, so that he might see everything that was going on, and as he lay in the soft, geranium-scented bed, his eyes were kept wide open by his delight with

what seemed to him the magnificence of the room.

It seemed as though each boy in the village considered himself Toby's particular and intimate friend during the week that preceded the coming of the circus; and the marbles, balls, and boats that were showered upon him in the way of gifts would almost have stocked a small shop.

Then, on this day before the circus, all the boys in town were most anxious to know just where Toby proposed meeting the cavalcade, at what time he was to start, and other details which showed quite plainly it was their intention to accompany him if possible.

When Toby went to bed, it was with the express understanding with Uncle Daniel that he was to be called at daylight, in order that he might start out to meet the circus when it stopped to prepare for its entrance into the town. The place where the procession was usually formed was

fully two miles from town, and as Abner could hardly walk that distance, and certainly could not walk so fast as Toby would want to go, he had agreed to drive the cows to pasture, after which he was to go to the tenting-ground, where his friend would introduce him to all the celebrities.

Chapter VI

THE GREAT EVENT

UNCLE DANIEL seemed quite as anxious as Toby that he should leave the house in time to meet his circus friends before the entrée was made, and Aunt Olive afterwards said he didn't sleep a wink after two o'clock for fear he might not waken in time to rouse the anxious boy.

It was fully an hour before sunrise when Uncle Daniel awakened Toby, and cautioned him to eat as much of the lunch Aunt Olive had set out as possible, insisting that what he could not eat he should put into his pocket, as it would be a long while before he would get his dinner.

The two miles Toby was obliged to walk seemed very short ones, and at nearly every house on the road one or more boys were

watching for him quite as eagerly as for the show itself, so that by the time he arrived at the place where two or three of the wagons had drawn up by the side of the road, he had as many as a hundred boys for an escort, all of whom were urging him to get the manager to take out a few lions and tigers for their inspection before starting for the village.

Toby could hold out no promise to them; on the contrary, he insisted that he hardly knew the manager, save by sight, and explained to them that they were unwise to come with him on any such errand, since none of the curiosities could be seen there, and if old Ben were still with the company he should ride back with him.

But the boys put very little faith in what he said, seeming to have the idea that he simply wanted to get rid of them, and, instead of going away, they surrounded him more closely.

Toby watched anxiously as each wagon

came up, and he failed to recognize any of the drivers. For the first time it occurred to him that perhaps those whom he knew were no longer with this particular company, and his elation gave way to sadness.

Fully twenty wagons had come, and he had just begun to think his fears had good foundation, when in the distance he saw the well-remembered monkey-wagon, with the burly form of old Ben on the box.

Toby could not wait for that particular team to come up, even though it was driven at a reasonably rapid speed; but he started towards it as fast as he could run, and, following him something like the tail of a comet, were all his friends, who, having come so far, were determined not to lose sight of him for a single instant, if it could be prevented by any exertions on their part.

Old Ben was driving in a sleepy sort of way, and paid no attention to the little fellow who was running towards him, until

Toby shouted, and then the horses were stopped with a jerk that nearly threw them back on their haunches.

"Well, Toby, my son! I declare, I am glad to see you;" and old Ben reached down for the double purpose of shaking hands and helping the boy on to the seat beside him. "Well, well, well, it's been some time since you've been on this 'ere box, hain't it? I'd kinder forgotten what town it was we took you from; I knew it was somewhere hereabouts though, an' I've kept my eye peeled for you ever since we've been in this part of the country. So you found your Uncle Dan'l all right, did you?"

"Yes, Ben, an' he was awful good to me when I got home; but Mr. Stubbs got shot."

"No? you don't tell me! How did that happen?"

Then Toby told the story of his pet's

death, and, although it had occurred a year before, he could not keep the tears from his eyes as he spoke of it.

"You mustn't feel bad 'bout it, Toby," said Ben, consolingly, "for, you see, monkeys has got to die jest like folks, an' your Stubbs was sich a old feller that I reckon he'd died anyhow before long. But I've got one in the wagon here that looks a good deal like yours, an' I'll show him to you."

As Ben spoke he drew his wagon, now completely surrounded by boys, up by the side of the road near the others, and opened the panel in the top so that Toby could have a view of his passengers.

Curled up in the corner nearest the roof, where Mr. Stubbs had been in the habit of sitting, Toby saw, as Ben had said, a monkey that looked remarkably like Mr. Stubbs, save that he was younger and not so sedate.

Toby uttered an exclamation of surprise

and joy as he pushed his hand through the bars of the cage, and the monkey shook hands with him as Mr. Stubbs used to do when greeted in the morning.

"Why, I never knew before that Mr. Stubbs had any relations!" said Toby, looking around with joy imprinted on every feature. "Do you know where the rest of the family is, Ben?"

There was no reply from the driver for some time; but instead, Toby heard certain familiar sounds as if the old man were choking, while his face took on the purplish tinge which had so alarmed the boy when he saw it for the first time.

"No, I don't know where his family is," said Ben, after he had recovered from his spasm of silent laughter, "an' I reckon he don't know nor care. Say, Toby, you don't really think this one is any relation to your monkey, do you?"

"Why, it must be his brother," said Toby, earnestly, " 'cause they look so much

alike; but perhaps Mr. Stubbs was only his cousin."

Old Ben relapsed into another spasm, and Toby talked to the monkey, who chattered back at him, until the boys on the ground were in a perfect ferment of anxiety to know what was going on.

It was some time before Toby could be persuaded to pay attention to anything else, so engrossed was he with Mr. Stubbs's brother, as he persisted in calling the monkey, and the only way Ben could engage him in conversation was by saying,

"You don't seem to be very much afraid of Job Lord now."

"You won't let him take me away if he should try, will you?" Toby asked, quickly, alarmed at the very mention of his former employer's name, even though he had thought he would not be afraid of him, protected as he now was by Uncle Daniel.

"No, Toby, I wouldn't let him if he was to try it on, for you are just where every

boy ought to be, an' that's at home; but Job's where he can't whip any more boys for some time to come."

"Where's that?"

"He's in jail. About a month after you left he licked his new boy so bad that they arrested him, an' he got two years for it, 'cause it pretty nigh made a cripple out of the youngster."

Toby was about to make some reply; but Ben continued unfolding his budget of news.

"Castle stayed with us till the season was over, an' then he went out West. I don't know whether he got his hair cut trying to show the Injuns how to ride, or not; but he never come back, an' nobody I ever saw has heard anything about him."

"Are Mr. and Mrs. Treat with the show?"

"Yes, they're still here; he's a leetle thinner, I believe, an' she's twenty pound heavier. She says she weighs fifty pounds

more'n she did; but I don't believe that, even if she did strike for five dollars more a week this season on the strength of it, an' get it. They keep right on cookin' up dinners, an' invitin' of folks in, an' the skeleton gets choked about the same as when you was with the show. I don't know how it is that a feller so thin as Treat is can eat so much."

"Uncle Dan'l says it's 'cause he works so hard to get full," said Toby, quietly, "an' I shouldn't wonder if I grew as thin as the skeleton one of these days, for I eat jest as awful much as I used to."

"Well, you look as if you got about all you needed, at any rate," said Ben, as he mentally compared the plump boy at his side with the thin, frightened-looking one who had run away from the circus with his monkey on his shoulder and his bundle under his arm.

"Is Ella here?" asked Toby, after a pause, during which it seemed as if he were

thinking of much the same thing that Ben was.

"Yes, an' she keeps talkin' about what big cards you an' her would have been if you had only stayed with the show. But I'm glad you had pluck enough to run away, Toby, for a life like this hain't no fit one for boys."

"And I was glad to get back to Uncle Dan'l," said Toby, with a great deal of emphasis. "I wouldn't go away without he wanted me to, if I could go with a circus seven times as large as this. Do you suppose young Stubbs would act bad if I was to take him for a walk?"

"Who?" asked Ben, looking down at the crowd of boys with no slight show of perplexity.

"Mr. Stubbs's brother," and Toby motioned to the door of the cage. "I'd like to take him up in my arms, 'cause it would seem so much like it used to before his brother died."

Ben was seized with one of the very worst laughing spasms Toby had ever seen, and there was every danger that he would roll off the seat before he could control himself; but he did recover after a time, and as the purple hue slowly receded from his face, he said:

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Toby. You come to the tent when the afternoon performance is over, an' I'll fix it so's you shall see Mr. Stubbs's brother as much as you want to."

Just then Toby remembered that Ben was to be his guest for a while that day, and, after explaining all Aunt Olive had done in the way of preparing dainties, invited him to dinner.

"I'll come, Toby, because it's to see you an' them that has been good to you," said Ben, slowly, and after quite a long pause: "but there hain't anybody else I know of who could coax me out to dinner; for, you see, rough fellows like me hain't fit to go

around much, except among our own kind. But say, Toby, your Uncle Dan'l hain't right on his speech, is he?"

Toby looked so puzzled that Ben saw he had not been understood, and he explained:

"I mean, he don't get up a dinner for the sake of havin' a chance to make a speech, like the skeleton, does he, eh?"

"Oh no, Uncle Dan'l don't do that. I know you'll like him when you see him."

"And I believe I shall, Toby," said Ben, speaking very seriously; "I'd be sure to, because he's such a good uncle to you."

Just then the conversation was interrupted by the orders to prepare for the parade; and as the manager drove up to see that everything was done properly, he stopped to speak with and congratulate Toby on being home again, a condescension on his part that caused a lively feeling of envy in the breasts of the other boys, because they had not been so honored.

Chapter VII

ATTRACTIONS FOR THE LITTLE CIRCUS

WHILE he stood there, the wagon in which the skeleton and his wife travelled rolled past; but Toby knew they were still sleeping, and would continue to do so until their tent was ready for them to go into.

The carriage in which the women of the company rode also passed him, and he almost fancied he could see Ella sitting in one of the seats sleeping with her head on her mother's shoulder, as she had slept on the stormy night when his head was nearly jerked from his body as he tried to sleep while sitting upright.

There were but three of the drivers who had been with the circus the year before, and, after speaking with them, he stood by

the side of the road, and watched the preparations for the entrée with feelings far different from those with which he had observed such preparations in that dreary time when he expected each moment to hear Job Lord order him to attend to his work.

The other boys crowded quite as close to him as they could get, as if by this means they allied themselves in some way with the show; and when a drove of ponies were led past, Joe Robinson said, longingly:

"There, Toby, if we had one or two of them to train, it would be different work from what it is to make the Douglass hoss remember his way round the ring."

"You wouldn't have to train them any," began Toby; and then he had no time to say anything more, for Ben, who had been talking with the manager, called to him.

"Has your Uncle Dan'l got plenty of pasturage?" asked Ben, when the boy approached him.

"Well, he's got twenty acres up by the stone quarry, an' he keeps three cows on it, an' Jack Douglass's hoss, that don't count, for he's only there till we boys have our circus," said Toby, never for a moment dreaming of the good fortune that was in store for him.

"So you're goin' to have a circus of your own, eh?" asked Ben, with a smile that alarmed Toby, because he feared it was a signal for one of those terrible laughing spells.

"We're only goin' to have a little three-cent one," replied Toby, modestly, noting with satisfaction that Ben's mirth had gone no further than the smile.

"Two of our ponies are about used up," said the manager, "and we've got to leave them somewhere. Ben tells me he is going to see your Uncle Dan'l this noon, so suppose you take one of these boys and ride them up to the pasture. Ben will make a bargain with your uncle for their keeping,

and you can use them in your circus if you want to."

Joe Robinson actually jumped for joy as he heard this, and Toby's delight spread itself all over his face, while Bob Atwood and Ben Cushing went near the fence, where they stood on their heads as a way of expressing their elation at thus being able to have real live ponies in their circus.

A black and a red pony were the ones pointed out for Toby to take away, and they were not more than twice as large as Newfoundland dogs; they were, in fact, just exactly what was wanted for a little circus such as the boys were about to start.

Joe was so puffed up with pride at being allowed to ride one of these ponies through the village that if his mind could have affected his body he would not have weighed more than a pound, and he held his head so high that it seemed a matter of impossibility for him to see his feet.

Very much surprised were Uncle Daniel

and Aunt Olive at seeing Toby and Joe dash into the yard astride of these miniature horses, just as they were sitting down to breakfast; and when the matter had been explained, Abner appeared quite as much pleased that the boys would have this attraction in their circus as if he were the sole proprietor of it.

It was with the greatest reluctance that either of the boys left his pony in the stable-yard and sat down to breakfast, so eager was Joe to get back to the tenting-ground to see what was going on, and so anxious was Toby to see the skeleton and his wife as soon as possible. But they ate because Uncle Daniel insisted that they should do so; and, when breakfast was over, he advised that the ponies be left in the stable until Chandler Merrill's pony could be removed from the pasture.

When they started down town again, Abner went with them, and it was so late in

the morning that Toby was sure the skeleton and his wife would be prepared to receive visitors.

When Toby, Abner, and Joe reached the tenting-ground, everything was in that delightful state of bustle and confusion which is attendant upon the exhibition of a circus in a country town, where the company do not expect that the tent will be more than half filled, and where, in consequence, the programme will be considerably shortened.

It did not require much search on Toby's part to find the tent wherein the skeleton and his wife exhibited their contrasting figures, for the pictures which hung outside were so gaudy, and of such an unusually large size, that they commanded the attention of every visitor.

"Now I'm goin' in to see 'em," said Toby, first making sure that the exhibition had not begun; "an' Joe, you take Abner over so's he can see how Nahum Baker

keeps a stand, an' then he'll know what to do when we have our circus. I'll come back here for you pretty soon."

Then Toby ran around to the rear of the tent, where he knew he would find a private entrance, thus running less risk of receiving a blow on the head from some watchful attendant, and in a few moments he stood before Mr. and Mrs. Treat, who, having just completed their preparations, were about to announce that the exhibition could be opened.

"Why, Toby Tyler, you dear little thing!" cried the enormous lady, in a joyful tone, after she had looked at the boy intently for a moment, to make sure he was really the one whom she had rescued several times from Job Lord's brutality; and then she took him in her fat arms, hugging him much as if he were a lemon and she an unusually large squeezer. "Where did you come from? How have you been? Did you find your Uncle Daniel?"

Her embrace was so vigorous that it was some seconds after she had released him before he could make any reply; and while he was trying to get his breath the fleshless Mr. Treat took him solemnly by the hand, and cleared his throat as if he were determined to take advantage of the occasion to make one of his famous speeches.

"My dear Mr. Tyler," he said, squeezing Toby's hand until it ached, "it is almost impossible for me to express the joy I feel at meeting you once more. We—Lilly and I—have looked forward to such a moment as this with a great deal of impatience, and even during our most prosperous exhibitions we have found time to speak of you."

"There, there, Samuel, don't take up so much time with your long-winded talk, but let me see the dear little fellow myself;" and Mrs. Treat lifted her slim husband into a chair, where he was out of her way, and again greeted Toby by kissing him on both cheeks with a resounding smack that

rivalled anything Reddy Grant had yet been able to do in the way of cracking his whip.

Then she fairly overwhelmed him with questions, nor would she allow her husband to say a word until Toby had answered them all. He was again obliged to tell the story of Mr. Stubbs's death; of his return home, and everything connected with his running away from the circus; while all the time the fat lady alternately kissed and hugged him, until it seemed as if he would never be able to finish his story.

"And, now that you are home again, don't ever think of running away, even though I must admit that you made a wonderful success in the ring;" and Mr. Treat crossed one leg over the other in a triumphant way, pleased that he had at last succeeded in getting a chance to speak.

Toby was very emphatic in his assurances that he should never run away again, for he had had quite as much experience

in that way as he wanted; and, after he had finished, Mrs. Treat, by way of further showing her joy at meeting him once more, brought out from a large black trunk fully half a dozen doughnuts, each quite as large among their kind as she was among women.

"Now eat every one of them," she said, as she handed them to Toby, "an' it will do me good to see you, for you always used to be such a hungry little fellow."

Toby had already had two breakfasts that morning, but he did not wish to refuse the kindly proffered gift, and he made every effort to do as she requested, though one of the cakes would have been quite a feast for him at his hungriest moment.

The food reminded him of the dinner-invitation he was to deliver, and, as he forced down the rather heavy cake, he said:

"Aunt Olive's killed a lamb, an' made an awful lot of things for dinner to-day, an' Uncle Dan'l says he'd be glad to have you come up. Ben's comin', an' I'm goin'

to find Ella, so's to have her come, an' we'll have a good time."

"Lilly an' I will be pleased to see your aunt's lamb, and we shall be delighted to meet your Uncle Daniel," replied the skeleton, before his wife could speak, and then a "far-away" look came into his eyes, as if he could already taste, or at least smell, the feast in which he was certain he should take so much pleasure.

"That's just the way with Samuel," said Mrs. Treat, as if she would offer some apology for the almost greedy way in which her husband accepted the invitation; "he's always thinking so much about eating that I'm afraid he'll begin to fat up, and then I shall have to support both of us."

"Now, my dear"—and Mr. Treat used a tone of mild reproof—"why should you have such ideas, and why express them before our friend, Mr. Tyler? I've eaten considerable, perhaps, at times; but during ten years you have never seen me grow an

ounce the fatter, and surely I have grown some leaner in that time."

"Yes, yes, Sammy, I know it, and you shall eat all you can get, only try not to show that you think so much about it." Then, turning to Toby, she said, "He's such a trial, Sam is. We'll go to see your uncle, Toby, and we should be very glad to do so even if we wasn't going for dinner."

"Ben an' me will come 'round when it's time to go," said Toby, and then, in a hesitating way, he added, "Abner's out here—he's a cripple that lives out to the poor-farm—an' he never saw a circus or anything. Can't I bring him in here a minute before you open the show?"

"Of course you can, Toby, my dear, and you may bring all your friends. We'll give an exhibition especially for them. We haven't got a sword-swallower this year, and the albino children that you used to know have had to leave the business, because albinos got so plenty they couldn't

earn their salt; but we've got a new snake-charmer, and a man without legs, and a bearded lady, so—"

"So that our entertainment is quite as morally effective and instructively entertaining as ever," said Mr. Treat, interrupting his wife to speak a good word for the exhibition.

Toby ran out quickly, that he might not delay the regular business any longer than was absolutely necessary; and at the very entrance of the tent, looking at the pictures in wonder that almost amounted to awe, he found Abner with his partners, and about a dozen other boys.

"Come right in quick, fellers," said Toby, breathlessly, "an' you can see the whole show before it commences."

Chapter VIII

THE DINNER PARTY

THE invitation was no sooner given than accepted; and in a twinkling every one of those boys was inside the tent, looking at the skeleton and the fat woman as though they had been old acquaintances.

Toby had told Mr. and Mrs. Treat of the little circus they were intending to have, and he introduced to them his partners in the enterprise.

The fleshy Lilly smiled encouragingly upon them, and the skeleton, moving his chair slightly to prevent his wife from interrupting him, said:

"I am pleased to meet you, gentlemen, principally, and I might almost say wholly, because you are the friends of my old friend, Mr. Tyler. Whatever business re-

lations you may have with him, whether in the great profession of the circus, or in the humbler walks of life, I am sure he will honor the connection."

From appearances Mr. Treat would have continued to talk for some time, but his wife passed around more doughnuts, and the attention of the visitors was so distracted that he was obliged to stop.

"And this is Abner," said Toby, taking advantage of the break in the skeleton's speech to lead forward his crippled friend.

Abner limped blushingly towards the gigantic lady, and when both she and her thin husband spoke to him kindly, he was so covered with confusion at the honor thus showered upon him that he was hardly able to say a word.

But the time was passing rapidly, and as there were many persons outside, probably, waiting for an opportunity to pay their money to see the varied attractions of the show, Mrs. Treat gave the signal for the

snake-charmer to begin the entertainment, which was given as a mark of respect, as the skeleton explained, to their friend Toby Tyler.

This private exhibition lasted about fifteen minutes, and when, at its close, the doors were thrown open to such of the public as were willing to pay to come in, the boys were not at all anxious to leave.

"Let them stay as long as they want to, Toby," said the skeleton indulgently.

The boys were only too glad to avail themselves of this permission, and Toby said to Abner:

"I want to see if I can find Ella, an' you stay here till I come back."

"I'll keep him right here by me," said Mrs. Treat, "and he'll be safe enough."

Remembering how she had served Job Lord, Toby had no fears for the safety of his friend; he went at once, therefore, to deliver the invitation to the last of Aunt Olive's expected guests.

When, after some little time, Toby returned, the boys had satisfied their curiosity so far as the side-show was concerned, and all except Abner had left the tent.

That he had found Ella was evident, as that young lady herself skipped along by his side in the greatest possible delight at having met her former riding companion; and that she had accepted his invitation to dinner was shown by the scrupulous care with which she was dressed.

"It's time to go up to Uncle Dan'l's," Toby whispered to Mrs. Treat, "an' Ben's harnessin' the hosses into your wagon, so's you won't have to go to the trouble of puttin' on your other clothes."

"I don't know as we ought to go up there in this rig," said Mrs. Treat doubtfully, as she looked down at her "show dress," made to display her arms and neck to the greatest advantage, and then at her husband's costume, which was as scanty as his body. "I wanted to dress up when we went there;

but I don't see how I'll get the chance to do it."

"I wouldn't bother, 'cause Uncle Dan'l will like you jest as well that way, an' it will take you too long," said Toby impatiently.

The skeleton, on being consulted as to the matter, decided to do as Toby wished, because by adopting that course they would the sooner get the dinner about which he had been thinking ever since he had received the invitation.

But while Mrs. Treat was ready to believe that her costume might be reasonably fit to wear to a dinner party, she was certain that something more than tights and a pair of short, red velvet trousers was necessary for her husband.

Mr. Treat tried to argue with his much larger half, insisting that Uncle Daniel would understand the matter; but his wife insisted so strongly, and with such determination to have her own way, that he com-

promised by adding to his scanty wardrobe a black frock-coat and a tall silk hat, which gave him a rather more comical than distinguished appearance.

The audience were dismissed as soon as possible; Abner was helped into the wagon, perfectly delighted at being allowed to ride in a circus van, and the party started for Uncle Daniel's.

Toby sat on the box with Ben, to show him the way; and when the gaudily painted cart stopped in front of the farm-house; it was much as if a peacock had suddenly alighted amid a flock of demure hens.

Uncle Daniel was out in the yard to receive his strangely assorted guests, and the greeting they received from both him and Aunt Olive was as hearty as if they had been old acquaintances.

There was a look of calm satisfaction on the skeleton's face as the odor of roast lamb was mingled with Uncle Daniel's welcome when he descended from the wagon; and

as the company were ushered into the "fore-room," the air of which was pungent with the odors of herbs used to keep the moths from carpet and furniture, a restful feeling came over them such as only those whose lives are dreary rounds of travelling can feel.

Uncle Daniel insisted on taking care of the horses himself, for his idea of the duties of host would not allow that Ben should help him, and almost as soon as he had finished this work dinner was ready.

When all the guests were at the table, and Uncle Daniel bowed his head to invoke a blessing on those who had befriended the fatherless, the look of general discomfort old Ben had worn from the time he reached the house passed away, and in its place came the peaceful look Toby had seen on Sundays after the old driver had come from church.

It seemed to Toby that he had never really known Uncle Daniel before, so jolly

was he in his efforts to entertain his guests; and the manner in which he portioned out the food, keeping the plates well filled all the time, was in the highest degree pleasing to Mr. Treat.

Of course very much was said about the time when Toby was an unwilling member of the circus, and Mrs. Treat and Ben told of the boy's experiences in a way that brought many a blush to his cheeks. Mr. Treat was too busy with Aunt Olive's lamb, as he affectionately spoke of it, to be able to say anything; he was wonderfully fortunate in not choking himself but once, and that was such a trifling matter that it was all over in a moment.

Old Ben told Toby that night, however, that Treat would not have got on so well, if his wife had not trodden on his toes frequently, as a hint to eat more slowly.

Although Abner had spent several hours in the side-show, it seemed as if he would never tire of gazing at Mrs. Treat's enor-

mous frame, and so intently did he look at her that he missed a good chance of getting a second piece of custard pie, though Toby nudged him several times to intimate that he could have more as well as not.

Ben told a number of stories of circus life; Mrs. Treat related some of her experiences in trying to prevent her husband from eating too fast; Ella told Aunt Olive of the home she and her mother lived in during winter; and the hour which had been devoted to this visit passed so pleasantly that every one was sorry when it was ended.

"You've got a trim little farm here," said Ben to Uncle Daniel, when the two went out to harness the horses; "an' I reckon that a man who has got land enough to support him is fixed jest about as well as he can be. I don't know of anything I'd rather be than a farmer, if I could only get away from circus life."

"Whenever you want to leave that busi-

ness," said Uncle Daniel solemnly and earnestly, "you come right here, and I'll show you the chance to become a farmer."

"I'd like to," said Ben, with a sigh of regret that the matter seemed so impossible; "but I've been with a circus now, man an' boy, goin' on forty-one years, an' I s'pose I shall always be with one."

Then he changed the conversation, making an arrangement with Uncle Daniel for pasturing the ponies that were to be left behind, and by the time the bargain was completed the horses were at the door.

While Uncle Daniel and old Ben had been at the stables, Mr. Treat had been showing his liberality by giving Aunt Olive tickets for the side-show and circus, and inducing her to promise that she and Uncle Daniel would see both shows. He had also given Toby fully a dozen circus tickets for distribution among his friends; and then, as Uncle Daniel entered, he said:

"I wish to express thanks—both for myself and my wife Lilly—for the very kind manner in which you have entertained us to-day."

Before he could say anything more the others came to say good-bye, and he was disappointed again. Aunt Olive kissed Ella several times, while the parting with the others was almost as between old friends, and the guests started for the tent again, more than satisfied with their visit.

"Now, Toby, you look me up jest after the show is out this afternoon, an' we'll fix it so's you shall have a chance to talk with Mr. Stubbs's brother," said Ben, as they were driving along.

As a matter of course Toby promised to be there, and to bring Abner with him.

"You said that little cripple had to live at the poor-farm, didn't you?" asked Ben, after quite a long pause.

"Yes, an' it's 'cause he hain't got no

father or mother, nor no Uncle Dan'l like I've got," said Toby sadly.

"Hain't he got any relations anywhere?"

"No; Uncle Dan'l said he didn't have a soul that he could go to."

"It must be kinder hard for him to live there alone, an' I don't s'pose he'll ever be able to walk."

Toby was not at all certain whether or not Abner could ever be cured; but he told the old driver what he knew of the lonely life the boy led. Ben did not appear to hear what was said, for he was in one of his deep studies and seemed unconscious of everything except the fact that his horses were going in the proper direction.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Toby," he said, after remaining silent until they were nearly at the tent. "I hain't got a child or a chick in the world, an' I'll take care of that boy."

Toby looked up in surprise, as he repeated, in a puzzled way:

"You'll take care of him?"

"I don't mean that I'll take hold an' tote him 'round; but he shall have as much as he needs out of every dollar I get. I'll see your Uncle Dan'l, an' fix it somehow so he'll be taken out of the poor-house."

"Why, Ben, how good you are!" and Toby looked up at his friend with sincere admiration imprinted on his face.

"It hain't 'cause I'm good, my lad; but if I didn't help that poor fellow in some way, I'd see them big eyes an' that pale face of hisn every night I rode on this box alone; so you see I only do it for the sake of havin' peace," said Ben, with a forced laugh; and then he stopped the horses at the rear of Mr. Treat's tent. "Now you jump down, Toby, so's to see the skeleton don't break himself all to pieces gettin' out, for I'm kinder 'fraid he will some day. I'd rather drive a hundred monkeys than one sich slim man as him."

Then Ben had a fit of internal laughter caused by his own remark, and Uncle Daniel's guests were ready to resume their duties at the circus.

Chapter IX

Mr. Stubbs's Brother

IT was so near the time for the circus to begin that Toby was obliged to hurry considerably in order to distribute among his friends the tickets the skeleton had given him, and he advised Abner to remain with Mrs. Treat while he did so, in order to escape the crowd, among which he might get injured.

Then he gave his tickets to those boys who he knew had no money with which to buy any, and so generous was he that when he had finished he had none for himself and Abner.

That he might not be able to witness the performance did not trouble him very greatly, although it would have been a disappointment not to see Ella ride; but he blamed himself very much because he had

not saved a ticket for Abner, and he hurried to find Ben that he might arrange matters for him.

The old driver was easily found, and still more easily persuaded to grant the favor which permitted Abner to view the wonderful sights beneath the almost enchanted canvas.

From one menagerie wagon to another Toby led his friend as quickly as possible, until they stood in front of the monkeys' cage, where Mr. Stubbs's supposed brother was perched as high as possible, away from the common herd of monkeys which chatted familiarly with every one who bribed them.

Toby was in the highest degree excited; it seemed as if his pet that had been killed was again before him, and he crowded his way up to the bars of the cage, dragging Abner with him, until he was where he could have a full view of the noisy prisoners.

Toby called to the monkey as he had been in the habit of calling to Mr. Stubbs, but now the fellow paid no attention to him whatever; there were so many spectators that he could not spend his time upon one, unless he were to derive some benefit in return.

Fortunately, so far as his happiness was concerned, Toby had the means of inducing the monkey to visit him, for in his pocket yet remained two of the doughnuts Mrs. Treat had almost forced upon him; and, remembering how fond Mr. Stubbs had been of such sweet food, he held a piece out to the supposed brother.

Almost immediately that monkey made up his mind that the freckle-faced boy with the doughnut was the one particular person whom he should be acquainted with, and he came down from his perch at a rapid rate.

So long as Toby was willing to feed him with doughnuts he was willing to remain;

but when his companions gathered around in such numbers that the supply of food was quickly exhausted, he went back to his lofty perch, much to the boy's regret.

"He looks like Mr. Stubbs, and he acts like him, an' it must be his brother sure," said Toby to himself as Abner hurried him away to look at the other curiosities. When he was at some distance from the cage he turned and said, "Good-bye," as if he were speaking to his old pet.

During the performance that afternoon Abner was in a delightful whirl of wonder and amazement; but Toby's attention was divided between what was going on in the ring and the thought of having Mr. Stubbs's brother all to himself as soon as the performance should be over.

He did, however, watch the boy who sold peanuts and lemonade, but this one was much larger than himself, and looked

rough enough to endure the hardships of such a life.

Toby was also attentive when Ella was in the ring, and he was envied by all his acquaintances when she smiled as she passed the place where he was sitting.

Abner would have been glad if the performance had been prolonged until midnight; but Toby, still thinking of Mr. Stubbs's brother, was pleased when it ended.

He and Abner waited by the animal's cages until the crowd had again satisfied their curiosity; and as the last visitor was leaving the tent old Ben came in, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Treat, both in exhibition costume.

Toby was somewhat surprised at seeing them, for he knew their busiest time was just at the close of the circus, and while he was yet wondering at their coming he saw Ella approaching from the direction of the dressing-tent.

He had not much time to spend in speculation, however, for Ben said, as he came up:

"Now, boy, you shall see Mr. Stubbs's brother, and talk to him just as long as you want to."

The skeleton and his wife and Ella looked at each other and smiled in a queer way as Ben said this; but Toby was too much excited at the idea of having the monkey in his arms to pay any attention to what was going on around him.

Ben, unlocking the door of the cage, succeeded, after considerable trouble, in catching the particular inmate he wanted, and, handing him to Toby, said:

"Now let's see if he knows you as well as Stubbs did."

Toby took the monkey in his arms with a glad cry of delight, and fondled him as if he really were the pet he had lost.

Whether it was because the animal knew that the boy was petting him, or because

he had been treated harshly, and was willing to make friends with the first one who was kind to him, it is difficult to say; certain it is that as soon as he found himself in Toby's arms he nestled down with his face by the boy's neck, remaining there as contentedly as if the two had been friends for years.

"There, don't you see he knows me!" cried the boy in delight, and then he sat down upon the ground, caressing the animal, and whispering all sorts of loving words in his ear.

"He does seem to act as if he had been introduced to you," said old Ben, with a chuckle. "It would be kinder nice if you could keep him, wouldn't it?"

"'Deed it would," replied Toby earnestly. "I'd give everything I've got if I could have him, for he does act so much like Mr. Stubbs it seems as if it must be him."

Then Ella whispered something to the

old driver, the skeleton bestowed a very mysterious wink upon him, the fat woman nodded her head till her cheeks shook like two balls of very soft butter, and Abner looked curiously on, wondering what was the matter with Toby's friends.

He soon found out what it was, however, for Ben, after indulging in one of his laughing spasms, asked:

"Whose monkey is that you've got in your arms, Toby?"

"Why, it belongs to the circus, don't it?" And the boy looked up in surprise.

"No, it don't belong to the circus; it belongs to you—that's who owns it."

"Me? Mine? Why, Ben—"

Toby was so completely bewildered as to be unable to say a word, and just as he was beginning to think it some joke, Ben said:

"The skeleton an' his wife, an' Ella and I, bought that monkey this forenoon, an' we give him to you so's you'll still be able to have a Mr. Stubbs in the family."

"Oh, Ben!" was all Toby could say; with the monkey tightly clasped in his arms, he took the old driver by the hand; but just then the skeleton stepped forward holding something which glistened.

"Mr. Tyler," he said, in his usual speech-making style, "when our friend Ben told us this morning about your having discovered Mr. Stubbs's brother, we sent out and got this collar for the monkey, and we take the greatest possible pride in presenting it to you; although, if it had been something that my Lilly could have made with her own fair fingers, I should have liked it better."

As he ceased speaking, he handed Toby a very pretty little dog-collar, on the silver plate of which was inscribed:

MR. STUBBS'S BROTHER.
PRESENTED TO
TOBY TYLER
BY
THE SKELETON, OLD BEN.
THE FAT WOMAN, LITTLE ELLA.

Toby took the collar, and as he fastened it on the monkey's neck he said, in a voice that trembled considerably with emotion:

"You've all of you been awful good to me, an' I don't know what to say so's you'll know how much I thank you. It seems as if ever since I started with the circus you've all tried to see how good you could be; an' now you've given me this monkey that I wanted so much. Some time, when I'm a man, I'll show you how much I think of all you've done for me."

The tears of gratitude that were gathering in Toby's eyes prevented him from saying anything more, and then Mrs. Treat and Ella both kissed him, while Ben said, in a gruff tone:

"Now carry the monkey home, an' get your supper, for you'll want to come down here this evening, an' you won't have time if you don't go now."

Ella, after making Toby promise that he would see her again that night, went with

Mr. and Mrs. Treat, while old Ben, as if afraid he might receive more thanks, walked quickly away towards the dressing-rooms, and there was nothing else for Toby and Abner to do but go home.

It surely seemed as if every boy in the village knew that Toby Tyler had remained in the tent after the circus was over, and almost all of them were waiting around the entrance when the two boys came out with the monkey.

If Toby had stayed there until each one of his friends had looked at and handled the monkey as much as he wanted to, he and Abner would have remained until morning, and Mr. Stubbs's brother would have been made very ill-natured.

He waited until his friends had each looked at the monkey, and then he and Abner started home, escorted by nearly all the boys in town.

The partners in the amateur-circus scheme were nearly as wild with joy as

Toby was, for now their enterprise seemed an assured success, since they had two real ponies and a live monkey to begin with. They seemed to consider it their right to go to Uncle Daniel's with Toby; and when the party reached the corner that marked the centre of the village, they decided that the others of the escort should go no farther—a decision which relieved Toby of an inconvenient number of friends.

As it was, the party was quite large enough to give Aunt Olive some uneasiness lest they should track dirt in upon her clean kitchen floor, and she insisted that both the boys and the monkey should remain in the yard.

Toby had an idea that Mr. Stubbs's brother would be treated as one of the family; and, had any one hinted that the monkey would not be allowed to share his bed and eat at the same table with him, he would have resented it strongly.

But Uncle Daniel soon convinced him

that the proper place for his pet was in the wood-shed, where he could be chained to keep him out of mischief, and Mr. Stubbs's brother was soon safely secured in as snug a place as a monkey could ask for.

Not until this was done did the partners return to their homes, or the centre of attraction—the tenting-grounds—nor did Toby find time to get his supper and go for the cows.

Not once during the afternoon had Toby said anything to Abner of the good fortune that might come to him through old Ben; but when he got back from the pasture and met Uncle Daniel in the barn, he told him what the old driver had said about Abner.

"Are you sure you heard him rightly, Toby, boy?" asked the old gentleman as he pushed his glasses up on his forehead, as he always did when he was surprised or perplexed.

"I know he said that; but it seems as if it was too good to be true, don't it?"

"The Lord's ways are not our ways, my boy, and if he sees fit to work some good to the poor cripple, he can do it as well through a circus driver as through one of his elect," said Uncle Daniel reverentially, and then he set about milking the cows in such an absent-minded way that he worried old Short-horn until she kicked the pail over when it was nearly half full.

Chapter X

THE ACCIDENT

THAT night Toby and Abner went to the circus grounds with Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive; and when old Ben approached the party as they were nearing the tent, Toby motioned the cripple to come with him, for he thought it might be better that the boy should not hear the conversation concerning himself.

It had been decided by Uncle Daniel that the boys should go to the circus grounds that evening, and stay there until it was nearly dark, when they were to go home and go to bed; for he never believed it could do boys any good to be out after dark, while he was certain it was better for their health if they went to bed early.

Therefore Toby intended to make this

visit simply one of farewell, after Abner should see a little more of the bustle and confusion that had so fascinated him in the afternoon.

To that end the boys walked around the enclosure, listened to the men who were loudly crying the wonderful things they had for sale, and all the while kept a bright lookout in the hope of seeing some of their circus friends.

It was nearly time for the performance to begin when the boys went into the skeleton's tent, and said good-bye to the thin man and his fat wife.

Then Toby, anxious to run around to the dressing-rooms to speak with Ella, and not daring to take Abner with him, said to the boy:

"Now you wait here for a minute, an' I'll be right back."

Abner was perfectly contented to wait; it seemed to him that he would have been willing to stay there all night, provided the

excitement should be continued, and he gazed around him in perfect delight as he leaned against one of the tent ropes.

Toby found Ella without much difficulty; but both she and her mother had so much to say to him that it was some time before he could leave them to go in search of Ben.

The old driver was curled up on his wagon, taking "forty winks," as he called a nap, before starting on the road again.

When Toby awakened him, he explained that he would not have taken the liberty if it had not been for the purpose of saying good-bye, and Ben replied, good-naturedly:

"That's all right, Toby; I should only have been angry with you if you had let me sleep. I've fixed it with your uncle about that little cripple; and now, when I get pitched off and killed some of these dark nights, there'll be one what'll be sorry I'm gone. Be a good boy, Toby; don't ever do anything you'd be afraid to tell your Uncle

Dan'l of, and next year I'll see you again."

Toby wanted to say something; but the old driver had spoken his farewell, and was evidently determined neither to say nor to hear anything more, for he crawled up on the box of the wagon again, and appeared to fall asleep instantly.

Toby stood looking at him a moment, as if trying to make out whether this sudden sleep was real, or only feigned in order to prevent the parting from being a sad one; and then he said, as he started towards the door:

"Well, I thank you over and over again for Mr. Stubbs's brother, even if you have gone to sleep." Then he went to meet Abner.

When he reached the place where he had left his friend, to his great surprise he could see nothing of him. There was no possibility that he could have made any mistake as to the locality, for he had left him standing just behind the skeleton's tent.

Toby ran quickly around the enclosure, asked some of the attendants in the dressing-room if they had seen a boy on crutches, and then he went into Mr. Treat's tent. But he could neither hear nor see anything of Abner, whose complete disappearance was, to say the least, very strange.

Toby was completely bewildered by this sudden disappearance, and for some moments he stood looking at the place where he had left his friend, as if he thought that his eyes must have deceived him, and that the boy was still there.

There were but few persons around the outside of the tent, those who had money enough to pay for their admission having gone in, and those who were penniless having gone home, so that Toby did not find many of whom to make inquiries. The attachés of the circus were busily engaged packing the goods for the night's journey, and a number of them had gathered around one of the wagons a short distance away.

But Toby thought it useless to ask them for tidings of his missing friend, for he knew by experience how busy every one connected with the circus was at that hour.

After he had looked at the tent rope against which he had seen Abner leaning, until he recovered his presence of mind, he went into the tent again for the purpose of getting Uncle Daniel to help him in the search. As he was passing the monkey wagon, however, he saw old Ben—whom he had left apparently in a heavy sleep—examining his wagon to make sure that everything was right, and to him he told the story of Abner's strange disappearance.

"I guess he's gone off with some of the other fellows," said Ben, thinking the matter of but little importance, but yet going out of the tent with Toby as he spoke. "Boys are just like eels, an' you never know where to find 'em after you once let 'em slip through your fingers."

"But Abner promised me he'd stay right here," said Toby.

"Well, some other fellows came along, an' he promised to go with them, I s'pose."

"But I don't believe Abner would; he'd keep his promise after he made it."

While they were talking they had gone out of the tent, and Ben started at once towards the crowd around the wagon, for he knew there was no reason why so many men should be there when they had work to do elsewhere.

"Did you go over there to see what was up?" asked the old driver.

"No, I thought they were getting ready to start, an' I could see Abner wasn't there."

"Something's the matter," muttered the old man, as he quickened his pace, and Toby, alarmed by the look on his friend's face, hurried on, hardly daring to breathe.

One look into the wagon around which the men were gathered was sufficient to show why it was that Abner had not re-

mained by the tent as he had promised; for he lay in the bottom of the cart, to all appearances dead, while two of the party were examining him to learn the extent of his injuries.

"What is the matter? How did this boy get hurt?" asked Ben, sternly, as he leaped upon the wagon, and laid his hand over the injured boy's heart.

"He was standing there close by the guy ropes when we were getting ready to let the canvas down. One of the side poles fell and struck him on the head, or shoulder, I don't know which," replied a man.

"It struck him here on the back of the neck," said one of those who were examining the boy, as he turned him half over to expose an ugly-looking wound around which the blood was rapidly settling. "It's a wonder it didn't kill him."

"He hain't dead, is he?" asked Toby, piteously, as he climbed up on one of the wheels and looked over in a frightened way

at the little deformed body that lay so still and lifeless.

"No, he hain't dead," said Ben, who had detected a faint pulsation of the heart; "but why didn't some of you send for a doctor when it first happened?"

"We did," replied one of the men. "Some of the village boys were here, and we started them right off."

Almost as the man spoke, Dr. Abbott, one of the physicians of the town, drove up and made his way through the crowd.

Toby, too much alarmed to speak, watched the doctor's every movement as he made an examination of the wounded boy, and listened to the accounts the men gave of the way in which the accident had happened.

"His injuries are not necessarily fatal, but they are very dangerous. He lives at the poor-farm, and should be taken there at once," said the doctor after he had made a slight and almost careless examination.

Toby was anxious that the poor boy should be taken to his home rather than to the comfortless place the doctor had proposed; but he did not dare make the suggestion before asking Uncle Daniel's consent to it. He was about to ask them not to move Abner until he could find his uncle, when Ben whispered something to the doctor that caused him to look at the old driver in surprise.

"I'll ask Uncle Dan'l to take him home with us," said Toby as he slipped down from his high perch and started towards the tent.

"I'll take care of that," said Ben as he went towards the tent with him. "I had just fixed it with your uncle so's he'd take Abner from the poor-farm an' board him, an' now there's all the more reason why he should do it. You go back an' stay with Abner, an' I'll bring your Uncle Dan'l out."

Then Toby went back to the wagon where

the poor little cripple still lay as one dead, while the blood flowed in a tiny stream from one of his arms, where the physician had opened a vein.

Not understanding the reason for this blood-letting, and supposing that the crimson flow was due to the injuries Abner had received, Toby cried out in his fear; but one of the men explained the case to him, and then he waited as patiently as possible for the driver's return.

Both Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive came out with Ben, and within a very few moments Abner was being carried to the farmhouse, in the same wagon that had taken him there before in company with the skeletion and his party, for that famous dinner.

It frightened Toby still more to see the unconscious boy carried into the house by Ben and the doctor as though he were already dead; and when Aunt Olive led them into the best room, where no one had slept since Uncle Daniel's sister died, it seemed

as if every one believed Abner could not live, or they would not have carried him there.

Toby hardly knew when Ben went away, or whether he said anything before he left, or, in fact, anything else, so sad and confused was he. He did not even think about Mr. Stubbs's brother, but remained in one corner of the room, almost hidden by one of the flowing chintz curtains, until Uncle Daniel heard him sobbing, and led him away to his room.

"There is good reason to hope Abner will recover," said the old man as he stroked Toby's hair; "but he is in the keeping of the One who never errs, and whatsoever He does is good."

Then Uncle Daniel actually kissed the boy, as he told him to go to bed and go to sleep. Toby went to bed as he was commanded, though it seemed impossible he should sleep while it might be that Abner was dying.

Chapter XI

CHANGE OF PLANS

TOBY was thoroughly surprised, when he awoke, to find that it was morning, and that his slumber had been as sweet as if nothing had happened. He dressed himself as quickly as possible, and ran down-stairs, and Uncle Daniel told him the doctor had just left, after saying he thought Abner would recover.

It was a sad visit Toby paid Mr. Stubbs's brother that morning; and, as he petted him, the tears came into his eyes when he thought of poor Abner, until he was obliged to leave the monkey to himself, after having tied him so that he could take a short run out of doors.

Then he visited the ponies in the stable, and when he returned to the house he found

all his partners in the circus enterprise, as well as several other boys, waiting to hear an account of the accident.

Dr. Abbott had reported that Abner had been injured; but, as he had not given any particulars, the villagers were in a state of anxious uncertainty regarding it.

After Toby had told them all he knew about the matter, and had allowed them to see the monkey and the ponies, which some of them seemed to regard as of more importance than the injured boy, Bob asked:

"Well, now what about our circus?"

"Why, we can't do anything on that till Abner gets well," said Toby, as if surprised that the matter should even be spoken about.

"Why not? He wasn't goin' to do any of the ridin', an' now's the time for us to go ahead while we can remember what they did at the show yesterday. It don't make any difference 'bout our circus if he

did get hurt," and Bob looked around at the others as if asking whether they agreed with him or not.

"I think we ought to wait till he gets better," said Joe, " 'cause he was goin' in with us, an' it don't seem jest fair to have the show when he's so sick."

"That's foolish," said Ben, with a sneer. "If he hadn't come up to the pasture the other day, you wouldn't thought anything 'bout him, an' he'd been out to the poor-farm where he belongs."

"If he hadn't come up there," said Toby, "I'd never known how lonesome he was, an' I'd gone right on havin' a good time without ever once thinkin' of him. An' if he hadn't come up there, perhaps he wouldn't got hurt, an' it seems almost as if I'd done it to him, 'cause I took him to the circus."

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Toby Tyler!" and Ben Cushing spoke almost angrily. "You act awful silly 'bout that

feller, an' father says he's only a pauper anyway."

"It wouldn't make any difference if he was, 'cause he's a poor lonesome cripple; but he hain't a pauper, for old Ben's goin' to take care of him, an' he pays Uncle Dan'l for lettin' him stay here."

This news was indeed surprising to the boys, and as they fully realized that Abner was under the protection of a "circus man," he rose considerably in their estimation.

They were anxious to know all about the matter, and when Toby told them all he could, they looked at the case in such an entirely different light that Ben Cushing even offered to go out in the field, where he could be seen from the windows of the room in which Abner lay, and go through his entire acrobatic performance in the hope the sight might do the invalid some good. Leander Leighton also offered to

come twice each day and play "Yankee Doodle" with one finger on the accordion, in order to soothe him.

But Toby thought it best to decline both these generous offers; he was glad they had been made, but would have been much better pleased if they had come while it was still believed Abner's only home was at the poorhouse.

When the boys went away, Toby pleaded so hard that Aunt Olive consented to his sitting in the chamber where Abner lay, with the agreement that he should make no noise; and there he remained nearly all the day, as still as any mouse, watching the pale face on which death seemed already to have set its imprint.

Each day for two weeks Toby remained on watch, leaving the room only when it was necessary, and he was at last rewarded by hearing Abner call him by name.

After that, Aunt Olive allowed the two

boys to talk a little, and a few days later Mr. Stubbs's brother was brought in to pay his respects to the invalid.

Many times during Abner's illness had the boys been up to learn how he was getting on, and to try to persuade Toby to commence again the preparations for the circus; but he had steadily refused to proceed further in the matter until Abner could at least play the part of spectator.

Uncle Daniel had had several letters from Ben inquiring about Abner's condition; and as each one contained money, some of which had been sent by the skeleton and his wife to "Toby Tyler's friend," the sick boy had wanted for nothing. Ben had also written that he had gained the consent of the proprietors of the circus to have the ponies driven for Abner's benefit, and had sent a dainty little carriage and harnesses so that he could ride out as soon as he was able.

Chandler Merrill had grown tired of waiting for his pony, and had taken him from the pasture, while Reddy had long since returned the blind horse to its owner.

But during all these five weeks the work had gone slowly but steadily on circusward. Leander had become so expert a musician on the accordion, that he could play "Yankee Doodle" with all his fingers, "Old Hundred" with two; and was fast mastering the intricacies of "Old Dog Tray."

As to Ben Cushing, it would be hard to say exactly how much progress he had made, the reports differed so much. He claimed to be able to turn hand-springs around the largest circus ring that was ever made, and to stand on his head for a week; but some of the boys who were not partners in the enterprise flatly contradicted this, and declared that they could do as many feats in the acrobatic line as he could.

Joe Robinson had practised howling

until Reddy insisted that there was little or no difference between him and the fiercest and strongest-lunged hyena that ever walked. Bob could sing the two songs his sister had taught him, and had written out twelve copies of them in order to have a good stock to sell from; but Leander predicted that he would not be able to dispose of many, because one was the "Suwanee River," and the other "A Poor Wayfaring Man," the words of which any boy could get by consulting an old music-book.

Reddy had made a remarkably large whip, which he could snap once out of every three attempts, and not hit himself on the head more than once out of five.

Thus the circus project was as promising as ever, and Abner, as well as the other partners, had urged Toby to take hold of it again; but he had made no promises until the day came when Abner was able to sit up, and Dr. Abbott said that he could go

out for a ride in another week, if he still continued to improve.

Then it was that Toby told his partners he would meet them on the first day Abner went out for a ride, and tell them when he would take up the circus work again, which made every one more anxious than ever to see the poor-farm boy out of doors.

From the time when the tiny little carriage and the two sets of harness glistening with silver had come, Toby had been anxious for a drive with the ponies; but he had resolutely refused to use them until Abner could go with him, although Uncle Daniel had told him he could try them whenever he wished. He had waited for his other pleasures until Abner could join him, and he insisted on waiting for this one. One day, when Aunt Olive spoke to him about it, he said:

"If I was sick, an' had such a team sent to me, I'd feel kinder bad to have some other boy using it, an' so I'm goin' to let

Abner be the first one to go out with the ponies."

It was hard not even to get into the little carriage that was so carefully covered with a white cloth in the stable; but Toby resisted the temptation, and when at last the day did come that Aunt Olive and Uncle Daniel helped the sick boy down-stairs, and lifted him into the prettiest little pony carriage ever seen in Guilford, he felt amply rewarded for his denial.

They drove all over the town, stopping now and then to speak with some of their friends, or to answer questions as to Abner's health; and when it was nearly time to return home Toby turned the ponies' heads towards the pasture, where he knew his partners were waiting for him according to agreement.

"We'll go on with the circus now," he said to Abner, "for I can take you with me in this team, an' you can stay in it all the time we're practisin', so's it'll be 'most as

good as if you could do something towards it yourself."

Abner was quietly happy; the tender, thoughtful care that had been bestowed upon him since his mishap had been such as, in his mind at least, repaid him for all the pain.

"I hope you will have it," he said, earnestly, "for, even if I can't be with you all the time, I won't feel as if I was keepin' you from it."

Then he put his hand in a loving way on Toby's cheek, and the "boss of the circus" felt fully repaid for having waited for his pleasure.

At the pasture all the partners were gathered, for Toby had promised to tell them when he would begin operations; and as he drove the ponies up to the bars, he shouted:

"Abner an' me will be up here about nine o'clock to-morrow morning, an' we'll bring Mr. Stubbs's brother with us."

There was a mighty shout, and Ben Cushing stood on his head, when this announcement was made, and then Toby and Abner drove home as quickly as their ponies could scamper.

Chapter XII

A REHEARSAL

WHEN Toby told Uncle Daniel that night of their intention to go on with the work of the long-delayed circus, and that Abner was to ride up to the pasture where he could see everything that was going on, the old gentleman shook his head doubtingly, as if he feared the consequences to the invalid, who appeared very much exhausted even by the short ride he had taken.

Abner, interpreting Uncle Daniel's shake of the head the same way Toby did, pleaded hard to be allowed to go, insisting that he would be no more tired sitting in the little carriage than he would in a chair at home; and Aunt Olive joined in the boys' entreaty, promising to arrange the pillows in such a

manner that Abner could lie down or sit up, as best suited him.

"We'll see what the doctor has to say about it," replied Uncle Daniel, and, with much anxiety, the boys awaited the physician's coming.

"Go? Why, of course he can go, and it will do him good to be out-of-doors," said the medical gentleman when he made his regular afternoon visit and Uncle Daniel laid the case before him.

Toby insisted on bringing Mr. Stubbs's brother into the invalid's room as a signal mark of rejoicing at the victory the doctor had won for them, and Abner was so delighted with the funny pranks the monkey played that it would have been difficult to tell by his face that the morning ride had tired him.

Mr. Stubbs's brother was quite as mischievous as a monkey could be; he capered around the room, picking at this thing and looking into that, until Aunt Olive laughed

herself tired, and Uncle Daniel declared that if the other monkey was anything like this one, Toby was right when he named him Steve Stubbs, so much did he resemble that gentleman in inquisitiveness.

The day had been so exciting to the boy who had been confined to one room for several weeks, that he was quite ready to go to bed when Aunt Olive suggested it; and Toby went about his evening's work with a lighter heart than he had had since the night he found his crippled friend lying so still and death-like in the circus wagon.

The next morning Toby was up some time before the sun peeped in through the crevices of Uncle Daniel's barn to awaken the cows, and he groomed the tiny ponies till their coats shone like satin. The carriage was washed until every portion of it reflected one's face like a mirror, and the harnesses with their silver mountings were free from the slightest suspicion of dirt.

Then after the cows had been driven to the pasture Mr. Stubbs's brother was treated to a bath, and was brushed and combed until, losing all patience at such foolishness, he escaped from his too cleanly-disposed master, taking refuge on the top of the shed, where he chattered and scolded at a furious rate as he tried to explain that he had no idea of coming down until the curry-comb and brush had been put away.

But when the pony team was driven up to the door, and Toby decorated the bridles of the little horses with some of Aunt Olive's roses, Mr. Stubbs's brother came down from his high perch, and picked some of the flowers for himself, putting them over his ears to imitate the ponies; then he gravely seated himself in the carriage, and Toby had no difficulty in fastening the cord to his collar again.

Aunt Olive nearly filled the little carriage with pillows so soft that a very small boy would almost have sunk out of sight in

them; and in the midst of these Abner was placed carefully, looking for all the world, as Toby said, like a chicken in a nest.

Mr. Stubbs's brother was fastened in the front in such a way that his head came just above the dash-board, over which he looked in the most comical manner possible.

Then Toby squeezed in on one side, declaring he had plenty of room, although there was not more than three square inches of space left on the seat, and even a portion of that was occupied by a fan and some other things Aunt Olive had put in for Abner's use.

Both the boys were in the highest possible state of happiness, and Abner was tucked in until he could hardly have been shaken had he been in a cart instead of a carriage with springs.

"Be sure to keep Abner in the shade, and come home just as soon as he begins to grow tired," cried Aunt Olive as Toby spoke to the ponies, and they dashed off like a

couple of well-trained Newfoundland dogs.

"I'll take care of him like he was wax," cried Toby as they drove out through the gateway, and Mr. Stubbs's brother screamed and chattered with delight, while Abner lay back restful and happy.

It was just the kind of a morning for a ride, and Abner appeared to enjoy it so much that Toby turned the little steeds in the direction of the village, driving fully a mile before going to the pasture.

When they did arrive at the place where the first rehearsal was to be held, they found the partners gathered in full force; and, although it was not even then nine o'clock, they had evidently been there some time.

Joe Robinson ran to let the bars down, while the ponies pranced into the field as if they knew they were the objects of admiration from all that party, and they shook their tiny heads until the petals fell from the roses in a shower upon the grass.

Mr. Stubbs's brother stood as erect as possible, and was so excited by the cheers of the boys that he seized the flowers he had tucked over his ears, and flung them at the party in great glee.

The carriage was driven into the shade cast by the alders; the ponies were unharnessed, and fastened where they could have a feast of grass; and Toby was ready for business, or thought he was. But, just as he was about to consult with his partners, a scream from both Abner and the monkey caused him to turn towards the carriage quickly.

From the moment they had entered the pasture, Mr. Stubbs's brother had shown the greatest desire to be free; and when he saw his master walking away, while he was still a prisoner, he made such efforts to release himself that he got his body over the dash-board of the carriage, and, when Toby looked, he was hanging there by the neck as if he had just committed suicide.

Toby ran quickly to the relief of his pet; and when he had released him from his uncomfortable position, the other boys pleaded so hard that Toby gave him his freedom, which he celebrated by scampering across the pasture on all four paws, with his tail curled up over his back like a big letter O.

It seemed very much as if Mr. Stubbs's brother would break up the rehearsal, for he did look so comical as he scampered around that all the partners neglected their business to watch and laugh at him, until Toby reminded them that he could not stay there very long because of Abner's weakness.

Then Bob and Reddy straightened themselves up in a manner befitting circus proprietors, and began their work.

"Leander is goin' to commence the show by playin' 'Yankee Doodle,'" said Bob, as he consulted a few badly written words he had traced on the back of one of his father's

business cards, "an' while he's doin' it Joe'll put in an' howl all he knows how, for that's the way the hyenas did at the last circus."

The entire programme was evidently to be carried out that morning, for, as Bob spoke, Leander marched with his accordion and a great deal of dignity to a rock near where a line representing the ring had been cut in the turf.

"Now you'll see how good he can do it," said Bob, with no small amount of pride; and Leander, with his head held so high that it was almost impossible to see his instrument, struck one or two notes as a prelude, while Joe took his station at a point about as far distant from the ring as the door of the tent would probably be.

Leander started with the first five or six notes all right, and Joe began some of the most wonderful howling ever heard, which appeared to disconcert the band, for he got entirely off the track of his original tune, and mixed "Yankee Doodle" with "Old

Dog Tray" in the most reckless manner, Joe howling louder at every false note.

Almost every one in that pasture, save possibly the performers themselves, was astonished at the din made by these two small boys; and Mr. Stubbs's brother, who had hung himself up on a tree by his tail, dropped to his feet in the greatest alarm, adding his chatter of fear to the general confusion.

But the two performers were not to be daunted by anything that could occur; in fact, Joe felt rather proud that his howling was so savage as to frighten the monkey, and he increased his efforts until his face was as red as a nicely boiled beet.

For fully five minutes the overture was continued; then the band stopped and looked around with an air of triumph, while Joe uttered two or three more howls by way of effect, and to show that he could have kept it up longer had it been necessary.

"There! what do you think of that?" asked Reddy, in delight. "You couldn't get much more noise if you had a whole band, could you?"

"It's a good deal of noise," said Toby, not feeling quite at liberty to express exactly his views regarding the music; "but what was it Leander was playin'?"

"I played two tunes," replied Leander, proudly. "I can play 'Yankee Doodle' with the whole of one hand; but I think it sounds better to play that with my thumb and two fingers, an' 'Old Dog Tray' with the other two fingers. You see, I can give 'em both tunes at once that way."

The monkey went back to the tree as soon as the noise had subsided; but, from the way he looked over his shoulder now and then, one could fancy he was getting ready to run at the first sign that it was to commence again.

"Didn't that sound like a whole cageful of hyenas?" asked Joe, as he wiped the

perspiration from his face, and came towards his partners. "I can keep that up about as long as Leander can play, only it's awful hard work."

Toby had no doubt as to the truth of that statement; but before he could make any reply, Bob said:

"Now, this is where Ben comes in. He starts the show, an' he ends it, an' I sing right after he gets through turnin' handsprings this first time. Now, Leander, you start the music jest as soon as Ben comes, an' keep it up till he gets through."

Ben was prepared for his portion of the work. His trousers were belted tightly around his waist by a very narrow leather belt, with an enormously large buckle, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled up as high as he could get them, in order to give full play to his arms.

"He's been rubbin' goose-grease all over him for as much as two weeks, an' he can bend almost any way," whispered Reddy to

Toby, as Ben stood swinging his arms at the entrance to the ring, as if limbering himself for the work to be done.

Leander started "Yankee Doodle" in slow and solemn strains; Ben gathered himself for a mighty effort, and began to go around the ring in a series of hand-springs in true acrobatic style.

Chapter XIII

THE RESULTS OF LONG TRAINING

MR. STUBBS'S brother had been a close observer of all that was going on, probably to guard against another sudden fright such as the overture had given him, and the moment Ben commenced to revolve he leaped from the tree, running with full speed towards the whirling acrobat.

Toby started to catch him, but the monkey was too quick in his movements: before any one could prevent him he had caught the revolving boy by one leg, and for a few seconds it was difficult to tell which was Ben and which the monkey.

Of course such an interruption as that broke up the performance for the time being, and Toby was obliged to exert all his

authority to disentangle the monkey from the performer.

"I knew it wouldn't do to let him be loose," said Toby, in a half-apologetic tone. "Now I'll set here an' hold him while you commence over again, Ben."

"Well, now, be sure you hold him," said Ben, seriously, "for I don't want him to catch me again when I'm goin' 'round so fast, for it hurts a feller to tumble the way he made me."

Bob offered to help hold the unruly monkey, and, when he and Toby had taken a firm grip on the collar, the music was started again, and Ben recommenced his performance.

This time he got through with it in a highly successful and creditable manner; he proved to be a really good acrobat, so far as turning hand-springs and standing on his head were concerned, and Toby felt certain that this portion of the entertainment would be pleasing.

Bob now went into the ring, and began to sing the "Suwanee River" in a manner which he intended should captivate his audience; but he had neglected to give the band any orders, and the consequence was that, when he commenced to sing, Leander began to play "Old Dog Tray," a proceeding which mixed the musical matters considerably.

"You mustn't do that, Leander," Bob said, sharply, after he had done his best to sing the band down, and failed in the attempt. "It won't do for you to play one thing while I'm tryin' to sing something else. Now, you be restin' while I'm doin' my part."

Leander was so deeply interested in the enterprise that he was perfectly willing to keep on playing without ever thinking of taking a rest; but in deference to Bob's wishes he ceased his efforts, although he did venture to remark that he noticed particularly, when the real circus was there,

that the band always played when the clown sang.

Bob got along very well with his portion of the rehearsal after the first mistake had been rectified; and when he finished he bowed gracefully in response to the applause bestowed upon him.

"Now's the time when you come in, Toby," said Bob; "an' if you'll see how you can ride the ponies, Joe'll run around the ring with 'em."

Toby was willing to do his share of the work, and all the more so because he could see that Abner, from his cosy seat under the bushes, was deeply interested in all that was going on.

Joe got one of the ponies while Toby made his preparations; and after the little horse had been led around the circle two or three times to show what was expected of him, Toby got on his back. This was Reddy's opportunity to act the part of ringmaster, and he seized his long whip, stand-

ing in the centre of the ring, in what he believed to be the proper attitude.

"Run around with him till I tell you to let go," said Toby, as he tied the reins together to form a bridle, and then stood on the pony's back as Mr. Castle had taught him to do.

There was so great a difference between the motion of this horse and that of the one owned by Mr. Douglass, that Toby began to understand it might be quite as necessary to train the animal as its rider.

Owing to his lack of practice he was a little clumsy; but after one or two attempts he went around the ring standing on one foot, almost as well as he had done it when with Ella.

The boys, who had never seen Toby ride before were thoroughly elated by the brief exhibition he gave them; and if he had done as they wanted, he would have tired both himself and the pony completely.

"I'll practise some, now Abner can come out," said Toby, as he led his steed to a spot where he could get more grass, but neglected to fasten him; "an' I wouldn't wonder if I could ride two at once, after a little while."

His partners in the enterprise were more than delighted with their rider, and they already began to believe they should have such a circus as would, in some points, eclipse the real one that had lately visited the town.

After the excitement caused by Toby's riding had in a measure died away, Ben continued with his feats according to the programme, and then Bob commenced his second song.

The audience of partners were listening to it intently, the more because it seemed to them that Bob had made a mistake as to the tune, and they were anxious to see what he was going to do about it—when the pony

Toby had been riding suddenly dashed into the ring, with what looked very like a boy on his back.

The partners were amazed at this interruption, and Bob continued to sound the note he was wrestling with when he first saw the pony coming towards him, until it ended almost in a shriek.

"Who is it?" cried Joe, as the pony dashed across the pasture, urged to full speed by its rider, and in an instant more all saw a long curling tail, which showed unmistakably who the culprit was.

"It's Mr. Stubbs's brother!" cried Toby, in alarm, "and how shall we catch him?"

It was, indeed, the monkey, and during the next ten minutes it seemed to the boys that they ran over every square foot of that pasture, scaring the cows and tiring themselves, until the frightened little horse was penned up in one corner, and his disagreeable rider was taken from him.

This last act of the rehearsal had occu-

pied so much time, and the monkey was making himself so troublesome, that Toby decided to go home, the others promising to come to Uncle Daniel's barn that afternoon, when Reddy was to explain how the tent was to be procured, a matter which, up to this time, he had kept a profound secret from all but Bob.

Short as the time spent at the rehearsal seemed to the boys, it was considerably too long for one in Abner's weak condition, as was evident from his face when Aunt Olive came to the door to help him out of the carriage.

He seemed thoroughly exhausted, and, as soon as he got into the house, asked to be allowed to lie down—a confession of weakness that gave Aunt Olive a great deal of uneasiness, because she considered herself in a great measure responsible for the ride and its results, as she had urged Abner to go before the doctor's advice had been heard in the matter.

Toby's fears regarding the invalid were always reflections of Aunt Olive's; but when he saw Abner go to sleep so quickly, he thought she was alarmed without cause, and believed his friend would be quite himself so soon as he should awaken.

Dinner-time came and passed, and Abner was still sleeping sweetly. Therefore Toby could see no reason why he should not join his partners, whom he saw going into the barn before dinner was over.

"The boys have come up to see 'bout the tent," he said to Aunt Olive, "an' I'm goin' out to the barn, where they're waitin' for me. Will you call me when Abner wakes up?"

Aunt Olive promised that he should be informed as soon as the sick boy could see him, and Toby joined his partners with never a fear but that Abner would soon be able to participate in all his sports.

That the boys had come to Uncle Daniel's barn on very serious business was evi-

dent from their faces, and the two large packages they brought.

Two rolls of what looked to be sail-cloth were lying on the barn floor, and around them Bob, Reddy, Joe, Ben, and Leander were seated with a look on their faces that was very nearly a troubled one.

"What's them?" asked Toby, in surprise, as he pointed to the bundles.

"The tent," and Reddy gave a big sigh as he spoke.

"What, have you got two?" asked Toby, a look of glad surprise showing itself on his face.

Reddy shook his head.

"What's the matter? If there hain't two tents here, what makes the two bundles?" And Toby was almost impatient because he could not understand the matter.

"Well, you see, this is just how it is," said Reddy, as he began to untie the fastenings from the rolls of canvas. "When I told you I could get a tent, I'd asked Cap-

tain Whetmore to lend me two of the sails what he took off his schooner, an' he told me yes."

"An' you've got 'em, haven't you?" and Toby looked meaningly at the canvas.

"Yes, we've got 'em," replied Joe; "but now we don't know how to fix 'em, 'cause you see we've got to put 'em up like a roof, an' we hain't got anything for the ends."

Reddy had planned to use each of the sails as a side to the tent, fastening them along the top to a ridge-pole; and it had never occurred to him, in all the time he had had to think the matter over, that as yet he had nothing with which to form the ends.

It was a question that puzzled the boys greatly, and caused their faces to grow very long, until Toby said:

"I'll tell you how we can fix one end. We can put it right up against the barn, where the little door is, an' then we can have the stalls for a dressin'-room."

The faces of the partners lightened at once, and each wondered why he had not thought of such a plan.

"An' I'll tell you how we could fix the other end," said Toby, quickly, as another happy thought presented itself. "If Mr. Mansfield would lend us his big flag, it would jest do it."

"That's the very thing, an' I'll go an' ask him now;" and Bob started out of the barn at full speed, while Reddy, now that the important question was settled, displayed great alacrity in unrolling his treasures.

The sails were not in a remarkable state of preservation, or Captain Whetmore would not have taken them from his vessel; but Reddy explained that the holes could be closed up by pasting paper over them, or by each boy borrowing a sheet from his mother and pinning it up underneath.

One of the sails was considerably larger than the other; but Reddy had also thought

of this, and proposed to make them look the same size by "tucking one in" at the end.

Bob returned before the sails had been thoroughly inspected, and brought with him the coveted flag, thus showing he had been successful in his mission.

"Now let's put it right up, an' then we can build our ring, an' do our practisin' there instead of goin' up to the pasture," suggested Ben.

Since there was no reason why this should not be done, Bob and Ben started for the woods to cut some young trees with which to make a ridge-pole and posts, while the others carried the canvas out-of-doors, and made calculations as to where and how it should be put up.

When they commenced work, they had no idea but that it would be completed before supper-time; but when the village clock struck the hour of five, they had not finished making the necessary poles and pegs.

"We can't come anywhere near getting it done to-night," said Toby, surprised at the lateness of the hour, and wondering why Aunt Olive had not called him as she had promised. "Let's put the sails back in the barn, an' to-morrow mornin' we can begin early, an' have it all done by noon."

There was no hope that they could complete the work that night. Therefore Toby's advice was followed; and when the partners separated, each promised to be ready for work early the next morning.

Chapter XIV

RAISING THE TENT

TOBY went into the house, feeling rather uneasy because he had not been called; but when Aunt Olive told him that Abner had aroused from his slumber but twice, and then only for a moment, he had no idea of being worried about his friend, although he did think it a little singular he should sleep so long.

That evening Dr. Abbot called again, although he had been there once before that day; and when Toby saw how troubled Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive looked after he had gone, he asked;

"You don't think Abner is goin' to be sick, do you?"

Uncle Daniel made no reply, and Aunt

Olive did not speak for some moments; then she said:

"I am afraid he stayed out too long this morning; but the doctor hopes he will be better to-morrow."

If Toby had not been so busily engaged planning for Abner to see the work next day, he would have noticed that the sick boy was not left alone for more than a few moments at a time, and that both Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive seemed to have agreed not to say anything discouraging to him regarding his friend's illness.

When he went to bed that night, he fancied Uncle Daniel's voice trembled, as he said:

"May the good God guard and spare you to me, Toby, boy;" but he gave no particular thought to the matter, and the sandman threw dust in his eyes very soon after his head was on the pillow.

In the morning his first question was regarding Abner, and then he was told that

his friend was not nearly so well as he had been; Aunt Olive even said that Toby had better not go into the sick-room, for fear of disturbing the invalid.

"Go on with your play by yourself, Toby, boy, and that will be a great deal better than trying to have Abner join you, until he is much better," said Uncle Daniel, kindly.

"But hain't he goin' to have a ride this mornin'?"

"No, he is not well enough to get up. You go on building your tent, and you will be so near the house that you can be called at any moment, if Abner asks for you."

Toby was considerably disturbed by the fact that he was not allowed to see his friend, and by the way Uncle Daniel spoke; but he went out to the barn where his partners were already waiting for him, feeling all the more sad now because of his elation the day before.

He had no heart for the work, and, after

telling the boys that Abner was sick again, proposed to postpone operations until he should get better; but they insisted that as they were so near the house, it would be as well to go on with the work as to remain idle, and Toby could offer no argument to the contrary.

Although he did quite as much towards the putting-up of the tent as the others did, it was plain to be seen that he had lost his interest in anything of the kind, and at least once every half-hour he ran into the house to learn how the sick boy was getting on.

All of Aunt Olive's replies were the same: Abner slept a good portion of the time, and during the few moments he was awake said nothing, except in answer to questions. He did not complain of any pain, nor did he appear to take any notice of what was going on around him.

"I think it's because he got all tired out yesterday, an' that he'll be himself again

to-morrow," said Aunt Olive, after Toby had come in for at least the sixth time, and she saw how worried he was.

This hopeful remark restored Toby to something very near his usual good spirits; and when he went back to his work after that, his partners were pleased to see him take more interest in what was going on.

The tent was up firmly enough to resist any moderate amount of wind, but it did not look quite so neat as it would have done had it not been necessary to perform the operation of "tucking in" one end, which made that side hang in folds that were by no means a pleasing addition to the general appearance.

The small door of the barn, over which the tent was placed, served instead of a curtain to their dressing-room; and at one side of it, on an upturned barrel, arrangements were made for a band-stand.

Mr. Mansfield's flag covered the one end completely, and all the boys thought it gave

a better appearance to the whole than if they had made it wholly of canvas.

The ring, which Reddy marked out almost before the tent was up, occupied nearly the whole of the interior; but since they did not intend to have any seats for their audience, it was thought there would be plenty of room for all who would come to see them. The main point was to have the ring, and to have it as nearly like that of a regular circus as possible, while the audience could be trusted to take care of itself.

The animals to be exhibited were to be placed in small cages at each corner. Reddy had at first insisted that each cage should be on a cart to make it look well; but he gave up that idea when Bob pointed out to him that six mice or two squirrels would make rather a small show in a wagon, and that they would be obliged to enlarge their tent if they carried out that plan, even provided they could get the nec-

essary number of carts, which was very doubtful.

In the matter of getting sheets from their mothers they had not been as successful as they had anticipated. No one of the ladies who had been spoken to on the subject was willing to have her bed-linen decorating the interior of a circus-tent, even though the show was to be only a little one for three cents.

Reddy was quite sure he could mend one or two of the largest holes if he had a darning-needle and some twine; but after he got both from Aunt Olive, and stuck the needle twice in his own hand, once in Joe Robinson's, and then broke it, he concluded that it would be just as well to paste brown paper over the holes.

It was a hard job to dig the ground up in order to make as large a ring as the boys had marked out, but by persistent work it was accomplished, as almost everything can be; and then Ben went to practising, in

order that he might, as he expressed it, "get the hang of the thing."

Of course, the fact that a tent had been put up by the side of Uncle Daniel's barn was soon known to every boy in the village, and the rush of visitors that afternoon was so great that Joe was obliged to begin his duties as door-keeper in advance, in order to keep back the crowd.

The number of questions asked by each boy who arrived kept Joe so busy answering them that, after every one in town knew exactly what was going on, Reddy hit upon the happy plan of getting a large piece of paper, and painting on it an announcement of their exhibition.

It was while he was absent in search of the necessary materials with which to carry out this work that the finishing touches were put on the interior; and the partners were counting the number of hand-springs Ben could turn without stopping, when a great shout arose from the visitors outside,

and the circus owners heard a pattering and scratching on the canvas above their heads.

"Mr. Stubbs's brother has got loose, an' he's tearin' 'round on the tent!" shouted Joe, as he poked his head in through a hole in the flag, and at the same time struggled to keep back a small but bold boy with his foot.

Toby, followed by the other proprietors, rushed out at this alarming bit of news, and, sure enough, there was the monkey dancing around on the top of the tent like a crazy person, while the rope with which he had been tied dangled from his neck.

It seemed to Toby that no other monkey could possibly behave half so badly as did Mr. Stubbs's brother on that occasion. He danced back and forth from one end of the tent to the other, as if he had been a tight-rope performer giving a free exhibition; then he would sit down and try to find out

just how large a hole he could tear in the tender canvas, until it seemed as if the tent would certainly be a wreck before they could get him down.

Toby coaxed and scolded, and scolded and coaxed, but all to no purpose. The monkey would clamber down over the end of the tent as if he were about to allow himself to be made a prisoner, and then, just as Toby was about to catch the rope, he would spring upon the ridge-pole again, chattering with joy at the disappointment he had caused.

The visitors fairly roared with delight, and even the proprietors, whose borrowed property was being destroyed, could not help laughing at times, although there was not one of them who would not have enjoyed punishing Mr. Stubbs's brother very severely.

"He'll break the whole show up if we don't get him off," said Bob, as the monkey

tore a larger hole than he had yet made, and the crowd encouraged him in his mischievous work by their wild cheers.

"I know it; but how can we get him down?" asked Toby, in perplexity, knowing that it would not be safe for any one of them to climb upon the decayed canvas, even if there were a chance that the monkey would wait for them to catch him after they got there.

"Get a long pole, an' scrape him off," suggested Joe; but Toby shook his head, for he knew that to "scrape" a monkey from such a place would be an impossibility.

Bob had an idea that if he had a rope long enough to make a lasso, he could get it around the animal's neck and pull him down; but just as he set out to find the rope, Mr. Stubbs's brother settled the matter himself.

He had torn one hole fully five inches long, and commenced on another a short

distance from the first, when the thin fabric gave way, the two rents were made one, and down fell Mr. Monkey, only saved from falling to the ground by his chin catching on the edges of the cloth.

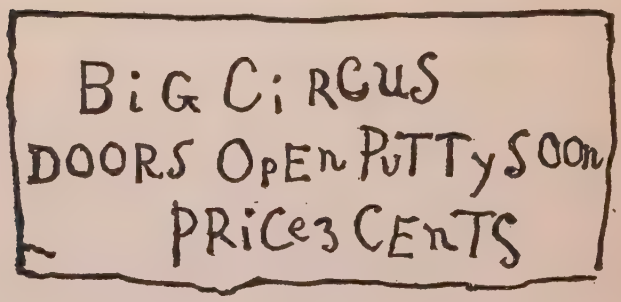
There he hung, his little round head just showing above the canvas, with a bewildered, and, at the same time, discouraged look on his face.

Toby knew that it would be but a moment before the monkey would get his paws out from under the canvas, and thus extricate himself from his uncomfortable position. Running quickly inside the tent, he seized Mr. Stubbs's brother by his long tail, pulling him completely through, and the mischievous pet was again a prisoner.

It was a great disappointment to the boys on the outside when this portion of the circus was hidden from view; but it was equally as great a relief to the partners that the destruction of their tent was at last averted.

After the excitement had nearly subsided, and Toby was reading his pet a lesson on the sin of destructiveness, Reddy arrived with the materials for making his circus poster—a sheet of brown paper, a bottle of ink, and a brush made by chewing the end of a pine stick.

He began his work at once. It was a long task, but was at last accomplished, and when the partners went to their respective homes that night, the following placard adorned one side of the tent:



Chapter XV

STEALING DUCKS

AFTER Toby had secured Mr. Stubbs's brother so that he could not liberate himself, he ran into the house to inquire for Abner.

The news this time was more encouraging, for the sick boy had awakened thoroughly after his long sleep, and had asked how the work on the tent was getting on. Aunt Olive thought Toby could see him, and, after promising that he would not remain very long, or allow Abner to talk much, he went up-stairs.

The crippled boy was lying in the bed bolstered up with pillows, looking out of the window that commanded a view of the tent, and evidently puzzled to know whether the large sheet of brown paper

which he saw on one side was there as an ornament, or to serve some useful purpose.

Toby explained to him that it was the poster Reddy had made, and then told him all that had been done that day towards getting ready for the great exhibition which was to dazzle the good people of Guilford, as well as to bring in a rich reward, in the way of money, to the managers.

Abner was so interested in the matter, and seemed so bright and cheerful when he was talking about it, that Toby's fears regarding his illness were entirely dispelled; he came to the conclusion that Abner had simply been tired, as Aunt Olive had said, and that he would be better than ever by morning.

This belief was strengthened by the doctor, who came while Toby was still with his friend, and who, in answer to a question, said, cheerily:

"Of course he'll be all right; he may not be quite smart enough to go out to-mor-

row, but before the week is ended I'll guarantee that you'll have hard work to keep him in the house."

Toby's heart was light again as he attended to his evening's work; and when he met Joe, on his way to the pasture, he laid plans for the coming exhibition with a greater zest than he had displayed since the matter was first spoken of.

Now that the tent was up, and Abner on the sure and rapid road to recovery, Toby thought it quite time that Mr. Stubbs's brother should be taught to take some part in the performance. Joe was of the same opinion, and they decided to commence the education of the monkey that very night, giving him two or three lessons each day until he should be thoroughly trained.

The cows were not exactly hurried on the way home that night; but they were not allowed to loiter by the roadside when they saw particularly tempting tufts of grass, and as soon as they were in the barn Mr.

Stubbs's brother was taken to the tent.

He was in anything rather than a good condition for training, for he evidently remembered his frolic of the afternoon, and was anxious to repeat it. Toby thought he could be made to leap through hoops as a beginning of his circus education, and all the energies of the boys were bent to the accomplishment of this.

But the monkey was either remarkably stupid just then, or determined to take no part in the show, for although Joe held the hoops until his arms ached, and Toby coaxed and scolded till he was hoarse, Mr. Stubbs's brother could not be persuaded even to attempt to leap.

"It's no use to try any more to-night," said Toby, impatiently, when it was nearly dark inside the tent, and his pet was showing signs of anger. "We'll commence the first thing in the mornin', an' I guess he'll do it."

"I'd whip him if I was you," said Joe,

who was thoroughly tired, and angry at the monkey's obstinacy. "If you would give him a good switchin', he'd know he's got to do it."

"I wouldn't whip him if he never did anything," said Toby, as he hugged his pet tightly, almost as if he feared Joe might attempt, as one of the partners in the enterprise, to whip the unwilling performer.

"'Tain't my monkey, so I hain't got nothin' to say about it," and Joe was impatient now; "but if he was mine, I'll bet he'd do what I told him to."

It seemed almost as if Mr. Stubbs's brother knew what had been said about him, for he nestled close to Toby, hiding his face on the boy's neck in a way that would have prevented his master from whipping him even if he had been disposed so to do.

"We'll put him in the shed, an' I guess he'll be good enough to-morrow," said Toby, cheerfully; and then, after fastening

the flag in the front of the tent in such a way that the wind would be kept out, if nothing more, he and Joe walked towards the house, discussing the question of the kind of tickets they should use at the show.

While they were yet some distance from the wood-shed in which Mr. Stubbs's brother was lodged, Aunt Olive called Toby to come quickly to the house.

"You put him in the wood-shed, an' fasten him in snug," said Toby, as he handed the monkey to Joe, and started for the house at full speed.

Now Joe knew perfectly well where Mr. Stubbs's brother was kept; but, as he had never seen him put away for the night, he was uncertain whether he should be tied there, or simply shut in. It hardly seemed to him that Toby would leave the monkey tied up by the neck all night, so he set him up comfortably on a bench, and carefully shut the door.

Toby had been called to go to the drug-

gist's for some medicine, and he came out of the house in such haste, calling to Joe to follow him, that nothing more was thought of the insecurely prisoned monkey.

When Toby returned, it was so late that Uncle Daniel advised him to go to bed if he had any desire to be "healthy, wealthy, and wise," and he obeyed at once.

Positive that Abner was on the road to recovery, sure that all his work had been done, and with nothing to trouble him, it was not very long that Toby lay awake after he was once in bed.

It seemed to him that he had been sleeping a long while, when he was awakened by the sound as of some one hunting around in his room; and, before he had time to call out, the candle was lighted, showing that the intruder was Uncle Daniel, only partially dressed and in a high state of excitement.

"What is it? What's the matter?" asked Toby, in alarm, thinking at once of Abner,

and fearing that something had happened to him.

"Hush!" said Uncle Daniel, warningly; "don't make a noise, for some one is trying to get into the hen-house, an' I am going to make an example of him. I suppose it's one of the tramps who went by here to-day, an' I want to find that gun I saw in here yesterday."

There was such a weapon in Toby's room, or, at least, what had once been a gun was there, for a hired man whom Uncle Daniel had employed left it there. It had been an army musket, and appeared to have been used as a collection of materials to repair others guns with, for the entire lock, ramrod, and at least four inches of the stock had been taken away, leaving it a mere wreck of a gun.

"It's up there in the corner behind the wash-stand," said Toby, coming out of the bed as quickly as if he had tumbled out, and alarmed at the thought of burglars.

"It hain't no good, Uncle Dan'l, for there's only a little of it left."

"It will do as well for me as a better one," said Uncle Daniel, grimly. "I don't want to shoot anybody, only to give them a severe fright, and perhaps capture them."

"Then what'll you do with 'em?" asked Toby in a whisper, almost as much alarmed by Uncle Daniel's savage way of speaking as by the thought of the burglars.

"I don't know, Toby, boy—I don't know. The tramps do trouble me greatly, an' I'd like to make an example of these; but I suppose they must be hungry, or else they wouldn't try to get into the hen-house. I guess if we catch one we'll give him a good breakfast, and try to persuade him to go to work like an honest man."

Uncle Daniel's anger usually had some such peaceful ending, as Toby knew; but he did look bloodthirsty as he stood there in his shirt-sleeves, with one stocking on,

and his night-cap covering one ear and but a small portion of his head, while he handled the invalid gun recklessly.

By the time he was ready to go in search of the supposed chicken-thief, Aunt Olive, looking thoroughly frightened, came into the room with his other stocking and his boots in her hand, insisting that he should put them on before he ventured out.

It must have been a very tame burglar who would have continued at his work after the lights had warned him that the inmates of the house were aroused; but Toby did not think of that. He saw that Aunt Olive had armed herself with the fire-shovel, that Uncle Daniel kept a firm hold of the gun even while he was trying to put his boots on, and he was frightened by the warlike preparations.

Toby put on his trousers and shoes as quickly as possible, and when Uncle Daniel was ready to start, he stationed himself directly behind Aunt Olive, a position

which he thought would afford him a fair view of what was going on, and at the same time be safe.

"Now be careful of that gun, Dan'l, an' don't go so far that they can hurt you, for there's no telling what they will do if they find out you mean to catch them," and Aunt Olive looked quite as badly frightened as did Toby.

"There, there, Olive, don't be alarmed," said Uncle Daniel, soothingly, "they will probably run as soon as they see the gun, and that will end it. I only hope that I can catch one," and Uncle Daniel went down the stairs as determined and savage looking a man as ever started in search of a supposed chicken-thief.

Aunt Olive insisted on carrying the candle, though Uncle Daniel urged that it would not be possible for him to surprise the burglars if she held this light as a warning; but she had no idea of allowing him to go out where there was every probability

that he would be in danger, unless she could see what was going on.

When the party reached the kitchen, the sounds which came from the hen-house told plainly that the party they were in search of had not ceased his work because the household had been alarmed. The snapping of wood could be heard, and if Aunt Olive had not been thoroughly aroused before, she was then, for laths were being broken, and one of her choicest broods of ducks was secured only by such frail barriers against either two or four-legged thieves.

"Stop them quick, or all the ducks will be out," she screamed; and, thus urged, Uncle Daniel made a bold stand.

"Get behind me, and hold your hand over the light," he whispered, and then he shouted, as he brought the gun up to his shoulder in a very threatening manner, "Come out here, and give yourselves up at once."

There was no answer made to this peremptory command, and, strangely enough, the work of destruction was continued as vigorously as if Uncle Daniel and his broken gun were a thousand miles away, instead of on the spot and ready for action.

"Come away from there instantly, and save yourself any further trouble," shouted Uncle Daniel in a louder voice, stamping his foot, while Aunt Olive brandished the fire-shovel to give emphasis to his words.

There was silence for a moment, as if the burglar had stopped to consider the matter, and then the work was continued with greater energy than before.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Uncle Daniel, as he brought the butt of his gun down on his own foot with such force that he was obliged to give immediate attention to the wounded member.

Toby had always had a wholesome dread of a gun; but his fear became greater than ever when he saw how much mischief could

be done with one as near a total wreck as that was, for Uncle Daniel had seated himself on the grass, regardless of the dew, and was hugging his foot as if he feared he should lose it.

Chapter XVI

A LOST MONKEY

EVEN though her husband was wounded, Aunt Olive could not stop to offer any aid while her precious ducks were in such peril, as the breaking of the laths proved they were; and she started forward alone and unarmed, save with the shovel, until a loud quacking indicated that the robber had made at least one prisoner.

Dropping the shovel, but still clinging to the candle, Aunt Olive seized the gun, and, dragging it along by the muzzle, she cried:

"I'll shoot you if you don't let them ducks alone, and go right straight away from here!"

The loud quacking of another duck proved that she had not alarmed the bur-

glar; and as she was now quite near the bold robber, by holding her candle above her head she could discern in the darkness what looked like a boy, with a duck tightly clutched in each hand.

"It's only a boy," she cried to Uncle Daniel, who had given over attending to his foot, and was coming up; and then, as she ran towards the thief, she cried, "Put down them ducks, you little rascal, or I will whip you soundly!"

The boy did not put the ducks down, nor did he stay for the whipping; but, with both the noisy prizes held in one hand, he began to climb the hen-house in a manner surprising in one so small.

By this time both Toby and Uncle Daniel were on the spot, and the former saw that the supposed boy was using a long tail in his work of climbing the hen-house.

"It's Mr. Stubbs's brother; don't shoot him!" he cried, forgetting, in his excitement, that the gun was dangerous only

when dropped on one's foot; and then he too tried to climb upon the hen-house.

"The monkey?" cried Uncle Daniel, as he felt on his forehead for his spectacles to enable him to see better. Aunt Olive made use of almost the same words; but, instead of feeling for her spectacles, she ran towards the building, as if she fancied it to be the easiest thing in the world to catch a mischievous monkey.

Toby knew, if Aunt Olive did not, that it would be the work of some time to catch Mr. Stubbs's brother, and that no threats would induce him to come down. Therefore he put forth all his energies in the vain hope of overtaking him.

Although the monkey was encumbered by the two ducks he had stolen, he could climb twice as fast as Toby could, and Aunt Olive realized the fact very soon.

"Scare him till he drops the ducks," she cried to Toby; and then, to do her portion of the "scaring," she brandished the fire-

shovel, and cried "shoo!" in a very energetic manner.

Uncle Daniel waved his arms, and shouted, "Come down! come down!" as he ran from one side of the building to the other; but the only reply to his shout was the quacking of the half-strangled ducks.

"Catch him, Toby, catch him, before he kills the ducks," cried Aunt Olive, in an agony of fear lest these particular inmates of her poultry-yard should be killed.

"That's what I'm tryin' to do," panted Toby, as he chased Mr. Stubbs's brother from one end of the roof to the other without even a chance of catching him.

The quacking of the ducks was growing fainter every moment, and, knowing that something must be done at once, Uncle Daniel hunted around until he found a long pole, with which he struck at the monkey.

This had the desired effect, for Mr. Stubbs's brother was so nearly hit two or

three times that he dropped the almost dead ducks, curled his tail over his back, and leaped to the ground. He alighted so near Aunt Olive that she uttered a loud shriek, nearly falling backward over the wood-pile; but the monkey was out of sight in an instant, going in the direction of the road.

As his pet disappeared in the darkness, Toby scrambled down from the roof of the building and started in pursuit; but before he had gone far he heard Uncle Daniel calling to him, while at the same time he realized that pursuit would be useless under the circumstances.

"He's run away, an' I won't ever find him again," he said, in so mournful a tone that Uncle Daniel knew the tears were very near his eyelids.

"He won't go very far, Toby, boy," said Uncle Daniel, consolingly, "and you can soon find him after the sun rises."

"He'll be more'n seven miles off by that time," said Toby, as he choked back his sobs, and tried to speak firmly.

"I don't know much about the nature of monkeys," replied Uncle Daniel, speaking very slowly; "but I am inclined to the belief that he will remain near here, since he has come to consider this his home. But it will be daylight in less than an hour, and then you can start after him. I will drive the cows to the pasture, so that you will have nothing to delay you."

Aunt Olive had caught up the ducks as soon as Mr. Stubbs's brother had dropped them, and, believing it was yet possible to save their lives, she had started towards the house for the purpose of applying some remedies.

"It's so near morning that I sha'n't go to bed again," she said, "and I'll get you something to eat, and put up a lunch for you, so you can stay out until you find him."

This offer on Aunt Olive's part seemed

doubly kind, since the monkey had done so much mischief among her pets, and Toby realized that it would be ungrateful in him to complain, more especially as Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive were willing to do all in their power to enable him to catch the fugitive.

"I'll mend the duck-pen," he said, resolutely putting from his mind the thought of Mr. Stubbs's brother, who he firmly believed was trudging up the road in the direction taken by the circus when it left town.

Uncle Daniel thought it would be just as well to remain up also, and he dragged the wreck of the gun into the house, putting it carefully away lest some one should be injured by it, before he commenced to build the fire.

Mr. Stubbs's brother had labored industriously when he set about reducing the duck-pen to kindling-wood; and although Toby worked as fast as possible, it was

nearly time for the sun to rise before he finished the job of repairing it.

By that time Aunt Olive had a nice breakfast ready for him, and a generous lunch done up neatly in paper.

Abner had not wakened, therefore Toby was obliged to go away without knowing whether he was better or worse; but Aunt Olive told him that she thought he need have no fear regarding the invalid, for she felt certain he would be much better when he awoke.

Toby ate his breakfast very hurriedly, and then started down the road in the direction of his partners' homes, for he thought there would be a better chance of capturing the runaway if four or five boys set out in pursuit than if he went out alone.

Fully two hours were spent in arousing his partners, explaining what had happened, and waiting for them to get their breakfast; but at the end of that time every

one of the circus managers was ready for the search.

There was a decided difference of opinion among them as to which direction they should take, some believing the monkey had gone one way and some another, and the only plan by which the matter could be settled was to divide the force into two parties.

Bob, Reddy, and Ben formed one division, and they started into the woods in a nearly straight line from Uncle Daniel's house. Toby, Joe, and Leander, making up the other party, went up the road, Toby insisting on this course because he was sure that Mr. Stubbs's brother would attempt to follow the circus of which he had once been a member, although so many weeks had elapsed since it had passed along there.

Leander was of the opinion that they ought to have borrowed a dog, with which to track the monkey more easily, and even

offered to go back to get one; but Toby thought that would be a waste of valuable time, more especially as it was by no means certain that Leander could procure the dog if he did go back.

Joe thought each inch of the road should be examined with a view to finding tracks of the monkey; but that plan was given up in a very few moments after it was tried, for the good reason that the boys could not distinguish even their own footprints, the road was beaten so hard; and so they could only walk straight ahead, hoping to come up with the fugitive, or to hear some news of him.

At each house on the road they stopped to ask if a stray monkey had been seen; but they could hear nothing encouraging until they had walked nearly three miles, and were just beginning to think it would have been wiser to remain with the party who went into the woods.

At last, however, a farmer told them that

he had seen an animal come up the main road, just about sunrise, and that it had gone up through his field into an oak grove. He had had no idea at the time that it was a monkey, and had intended to take his gun and go in search of it as soon as he could spare the time.

Toby trembled as the man said this, for Mr. Stubbs's death was too vivid in his mind for him to think without a shudder of any one going in search of this monkey with a gun. He started for the grove at full speed, fearing that some one with more time at his disposal had seen his pet, and might even now be in pursuit of him.

Of course the boys did not know certainly that the animal the farmer had seen was Mr. Stubbs's brother, but all were quite sure it was; and, before they had been in the oak grove ten minutes they saw the monkey himself, hanging by his tail and one paw from the branch of a tree.

Chapter XVII

DRIVING A MONKEY

TOBY was so delighted at seeing his pet safe and alive that he set up a great shout; and the monkey, thus warned that boys who would chain him down to the drudgery of a circus ring were on his track, started off at full speed, scolding furiously as he went.

To catch a monkey in the woods was even a harder task than to "scrape" him from the tent, or to capture him on the roof of the hen-house; but he must be caught, and the three boys started after him, fully aware of the difficult task before them.

To Mr. Stubbs's brother this flight and pursuit was simply the wildest kind of a frolic, and he fairly screamed with delight as he leaped from one tree to another, some-

times allowing them almost to touch him, and then starting off at full speed until nearly out of sight.

For an hour this tantalizing work was continued, and the pursuers were nearly exhausted. Half the time they had been running at full speed, and the only chance for rest had been when they were trying to creep upon Mr. Stubbs's brother unawares, which was just about no rest at all.

Leander, who was naturally a very slow-moving boy, and quite fleshy, was more quickly tired than the others. When, for at least the twentieth time, they thought they had the monkey within their grasp, and he darted to the top of one of the tallest trees, Leander declared he could not take another step, even though the life of the monkey and the success of the circus depended upon it.

Of course, it was not to be thought of that they should leave their band there exhausted and alone, so Toby decided they should

rest as long as Mr. Stubbs's brother remained in the tree, and it was determined to occupy the time by eating the luncheon Aunt Olive had prepared.

During the last ten minutes of the chase, Leander's face had worn a very gloomy expression; but it lighted wonderfully when the package of food was opened, and Toby helped him to a very generous slice of bread and meat.

Nor was Leander the only one who looked with favor upon the food. Mr. Stubbs's brother had been a close observer of all that was going on at the foot of the tree in which he had taken refuge, and he showed every disposition to make one of the eating party.

Seeing his evident hunger, Toby was sure it would be possible to capture the monkey by means of the food, and he walked around the trunk of the tree, holding a piece of ginger-bread temptingly in his fingers.

The monkey came down from branch to

branch, as if he had decided to allow himself to be made a prisoner for the sake of the food; but, just as Toby was about to seize him, he jumped back with a cry that sounded much as if he were laughing because of the disappointment he had caused.

Then Joe tried his skill at monkey-catching, coming about as near success as Toby had done; and Leander was roused to action by the new phase the chase had assumed. He too held out some food in order to give Mr. Stubbs's brother the impression that all he had to do was to come and get it.

In thus trying the coaxing plan, all three of the boys got on one side of the tree, while the greater part of their provisions was on the opposite side.

The monkey descended again, first towards one boy and then towards another, as if it were his purpose to allow all three to catch him, and all were equally certain they were about to succeed, when Mr. Stubbs's

brother suddenly ran along the branches towards the food. Before it was possible for any of the boys to intercept him, he had dropped to the ground, seized two of the very largest pieces of cake, and was up in the tree again so quickly that but for the cake he had in his paws it might have been doubted whether or not he had been on the ground at all.

Now Mr. Stubbs's brother could laugh at his pursuers, if it is possible for a monkey to laugh; for, without any thanks to them, he had a trifle more than his share of the provisions, and was still at liberty.

"It hain't any use," said Joe, in despair, as he threw himself on the ground and attacked the luncheon savagely, "I don't believe we shall ever get him; an' if we don't, it won't be much use for us to have our show, for every real circus has a monkey."

"We *must* catch him," replied Toby, mournfully, looking up into the tree where his pet sat eating the stolen food with the

greatest possible enjoyment. "I wouldn't go home an' leave him here if I had to stay all night."

"One might watch here while the others went back to the village an' got every feller there to come out an' help catch him," suggested Leander, who was famous for having ideas so brilliant that no one could carry them into execution.

"We're goin' away from home all the time this way," said Toby, after he had studied the matter carefully, without paying any attention to the suggestion made by Leander; "now let's get a little ways the other side of the tree, an' when he comes down again he'll have to go towards home. Even if we can't catch him, perhaps we can drive him into the village."

Even Leander could see the wisdom of this plan, and the party moved their luncheon and themselves to the side of the tree opposite to that on which they had approached it.

Of course there was nothing to do but await Mr. Stubbs's brother's pleasure in the matter, and he seemed to be in no haste to make a move. He ate his cake in the most leisurely fashion possible, and then appeared to be wonderfully interested in the leaves, for he would spend several minutes pulling one apart, probably to see how it was made.

But he was obliged to come down at last, and he chose the time just as Leander had settled himself comfortably for a nap, which did not tend to make the band regard him with additional favor.

As Toby had thought, the monkey started back in the direction they had come; and, as he was going towards home, they did not make any effort to hurry him. If they could not catch him, they could at least drive him, and they were satisfied to let him go as slowly as he chose—a plan which met with hearty approval from Leander.

For some time Mr. Stubbs's brother

moved along as if it were his greatest desire to be back at Uncle Daniel's again, and then Toby saw him run along swiftly as if he had found something under a tree which interested him greatly.

Afraid that the monkey had done this simply to avoid being driven, and that he might dart through the underbrush and get in rear of them again, Toby ran forward quickly; but before he had taken more than a dozen steps he heard piercing shrieks, which evidently came from the monkey, while the commotion among the bushes indicated that a struggle of some kind was taking place there.

With but one thought, and that for the safety of his pet, Toby ran ahead regardless of the bushes that tore his clothing and scratched his face. A struggle was going on, as he saw when he pulled the branches of the trees away, and Mr. Stubbs's brother was getting decidedly the worst of it.

A small, prickly ball curled up at the

foot of the tree, and the monkey striking at it savagely with his paws, while porcupine quills were sticking in his face and body, told the whole story.

The monkey had seen the porcupine, and, much to his discomfort, had tried to make that animal's acquaintance. As every boy knows, when one of these animals is attacked it immediately rolls itself up into a ball, with the quills or spines sticking straight out, and the attacking party generally gets plentifully supplied with them in a very short time.

It was some moments before Toby could persuade his pet to stop trying to inflict punishment when he was getting the greater part himself; but he pulled him away at last, and the porcupine, unrolling himself with a grunt of satisfaction, trotted away into the bushes.

There was no disposition on the part of Mr. Stubbs's brother to run away again. He stood there looking as sad and discour-

aged as a monkey ought to look who had commenced his day's work by stealing ducks, and concluded it by fighting a porcupine.

The quills stood out from his face, making him look as if sadly in need of shaving, while on almost every inch of his body there was one of these natural weapons, giving him a decidedly comical appearance.

As he stood there holding out his paws to Toby as if asking him to extract the spines, and squinting down now and then at those in his face, the boys did not try to restrain their laughter, which appeared to make the inquisitive monkey very angry.

He screamed and scolded in the shrillest tones until Toby set about picking out the quills for him, and Joe took a firm hold of his collar, to make sure he should not escape when he was relieved from the effects of his introduction to the porcupine.

Chapter XVIII

COLLECTING THE ANIMALS

IT was quite a task to extract the porcupine quills from Mr. Stubbs's brother, because the operation was painful, and he danced about in a way that seriously interfered with the work.

But the last one was out after a time, and the monkey was marched along between Joe and Toby, looking very repentant now that he was in his master's power again.

"I tell you what it is," said Joe, sagely, after he had walked awhile in silence as if studying some matter, "we'd better get about six big chains an' fasten Mr. Stubbs's brother to the tent; 'cause if we keep on tryin' to train him, he'll keep on gettin' loose, an' before he gets through with it, we sha'n't have any show left."

"I think that's the best thing we can do,"

panted Leander; "'cause if all hands of us has to start out many times like this, some of the boys will come up while we're off, an' pull the tent down."

"We can tie him in the tent, and have him for a wild man of Borneo," suggested Joe.

"I guess we won't train him," replied Toby, rather sorry to deprive his pet of the pleasure of being one of the performers, and yet fearing the trouble he would cause if they should try to make anything more than an ordinary monkey out of him.

The pursuit had led the boys farther from home than they had imagined, and it was noon when, weary and hungry, they arrived at the tent, where they found the other party, who had given up the search some time before. They had travelled through the woods without hearing or seeing anything of the runaway, and had returned in the hope that the others had been more successful.

Leaving Mr. Stubbs's brother in charge of the partners, who, it was safe to say, would now take very good care to prevent his escape, Toby hurried into the house to see Abner.

The sick boy was no better, Aunt Olive said, neither did he appear to be any worse —he was sleeping then; and, after eating some of his dinner at the table, and taking the remainder in his hands, Toby went out to the tent again.

He found his partners indulging in an animated discussion as to when the performance should be given.

Reddy was in favor of having it within two or three days at furthest; Bob thought that, as Mr. Stubbs's brother was not to be one of the performers, there was no reason for delay.

All the others were of the same opinion, but Toby urged them to wait until Abner could take part in it.

To this Bob had a very reasonable objec-

tion: in two weeks more school would begin, and then, of course, the circus would be out of the question. If their first exhibition should be a success, as it undoubtedly would be, they could give a second performance when Abner should get well enough to attend it; and that would be quite as pleasing to him as for all the talent to remain idle while waiting for his recovery.

Toby felt that his partners asked him to do only that which was fair; the circus scheme had already done Abner more harm than good, and, as he did not seem to be dangerously sick, it would be unkind to the others to insist on waiting.

"I'd rather Abner was with us when we had the first show," said Toby; "but I s'pose it'll be just as well to go ahead with it, an' then give another after he can come out."

"Then we'll have it Saturday afternoon; an' while Reddy's fixin' up the tickets, Ben

an' I'll get the animals up here, so's to see how they'll look, an' to let 'em get kinder used to the tent."

Reddy was a boy who did not believe in wasting any time after a matter was decided upon, and almost as soon as Toby consented to go on with the show, he went for materials with which to make posters and tickets.

His activity aroused the others, and all started out to bring in the animals, leaving Toby to guard Mr. Stubbs's brother and the tent. The canvas would take care of itself, so long as it was unmolested, but the other portion of Toby's charge was not so easily managed. After much thought, however, he settled the monkey question by tying Mr. Stubbs's brother to the end pole, with a rope long enough to allow him to climb nearly to the top, but short enough to keep him at a safe distance from the canvas.

By the time this was done, Ben arrived with the first instalment of curiosities. His crowing hen he had under his arm, and

Mrs. Simpson's three-legged cat and four kittens he brought in a basket.

"Joe's got a cage 'most built for the hen, an' I'll fix one for the cat this afternoon," he said, as he seated himself on the basket, and held the hen in his lap.

"You can't fix it if you've got to hold her," said Toby, as he brought from the barn a bushel-basket, which was converted into a coop by turning it bottom side up, and putting the hen underneath it.

Ben was about to make a search of the barn for the purpose of finding some materials with which to build the cat's cage, when a great noise was heard outside, and the two partners left the tent hurriedly.

"It's Bob an' his calf," said Ben, who had got out first, and then he started towards the newcomers at full speed.

It was Bob and his calf; but the animal should have been mentioned first, for it seemed very much as if he were bringing his master, instead of being brought by

him. In order to carry his cage of mice and lead the calf at the same time, Bob had tied the rope that held this representative of a grizzly bear around his waist, and had taken the cage under his arm. This plan had worked well enough until just as they were entering the field that led to the tent, when Bob tripped and fell, scaring the calf so that he started at full speed for the barn, of course dragging the unfortunate Bob with him.

Sometimes on his face, sometimes on his back, screaming for help whenever his mouth was uppermost, and clinging firmly to the cage of mice, Bob was dragged almost to the door of the tent, where the frightened animal was finally secured.

"Well, I've got him here, an' I hain't lost a single mouse," said Bob, as he counted his treasures before even scraping the dirt from his face.

Ben and Toby led the calf into the tent after some difficulty, owing to the attempts

of Mr. Stubbs's brother to frighten him, and then they did their best to separate the dirt from their partner.

In this good work they had but partially succeeded, when Reddy arrived with a large package of brown paper, and his cat without a tail. This startling curiosity he carried in a bag slung over his shoulder, and from the expression on his face when he came up it seemed almost certain that the cat's claws had passed through the bag and into her master's flesh.

"There," he exclaimed, with a sigh of relief, as he threw his live burden at the foot of the post to which Mr. Stubbs's brother was tied, "I've kept shiftin' that cat from one shoulder to the other ever since I started, an' I tell you she can scratch as well as if she had a tail as long as the monkey's."

It surely seemed as if the work of building the cages had been too long neglected, for here were a number of curiosities without anything in which they could be exhib-

ited, and the audience might be dissatisfied if asked to pay to see a cat in a bag, or a hen under a bushel-basket.

Toby spoke of this, and Bob assured him that it could easily be arranged as soon as all the partners should arrive.

"You see, we've got to carry Mrs. Simpson's cat an' kittens home every night, 'cause she says the rats are so thick she can spare her only day-times, an' we don't need a cage for her till the show comes off," said Bob, as he bustled around again to find materials.

Mr. Stubbs's brother demanded his master's attention about this time, owing to his attempts to make friends with the calf. From the time that this peaceful animal, who was to be transformed into a grizzly bear, had been brought into the tent, the monkey had tried in every possible way to get at him, and the calf had shown unmistakable signs of a desire to butt the monkey; but the ropes which held them both had

prevented the meeting. Now, however, Bob detected Mr. Stubbs's brother in trying to bite his rope in two, and it was considered necessary to set a guard over him.

Reddy was already busily engaged in painting the posters, despite the confusion that reigned, and, as his work would keep him inside the tent, he was chosen to have general care of the animals, a task which he, without a thought of possible consequences, accepted cheerfully.

Leander and Joe came together, the first bringing his accordion, and four rabbits in a cage, and the last carrying five striped squirrels in a paste-board box.

Leander was the only one who had been thoughtful enough to have his animals ready for exhibition, and the cage in which the long-eared pets were confined bore the inscription, done in a very fanciful way with blue and red crayons, "Wolves. Keep off!"

This cage was placed in the corner near

the band-stand, where the musician could attend to his musical work and have a watchful eye on his pets at the same time.

Reddy had been busily engaged in painting a notice to be hung up over the calf; and, as he fastened it to the barn just over the spot where the animal was to be kept, Bob read, with no small degree of pride in the thought that he was the fortunate possessor of such a prize,

GRIZZLEE BARE
FROM THE ROCKEY MOUNTAINS!

Then the artist went back to his task of painting posters, while the others set to work, full of determination to build the necessary number of cages if there was wood enough in Uncle Daniel's barn.

They found timber enough and to spare; but, as it was not exactly the kind they wanted, Toby proposed that they should all go over to the house, explain the matter to

Aunt Olive, and ask her to give them as many empty boxes as she could afford to part with.

As has been said before, Aunt Olive looked upon the circus scheme with favor, and when she was called upon to aid in the way of furnishing cages for wild animals, she gave the boys full permission to take all the boxes they could find in the shed. They found so many that they were able to select those best suited to the different species of animals, and yet have quite a stock to fall back upon in case they should make additions to their menagerie.

Now that the boys had found cages ready made, and needing only some bars or slats across the front, they did not think it necessary to hurry. They stayed for some time to talk of Abner, and to test some doughnuts Aunt Olive was frying. It is very likely that they would have remained even longer than they did, if the doughnut-frying had not been completed, and the tempt-

ing dainties placed upon a high shelf beyond their reach, as a gentle intimation that they had had about as many as they would get that afternoon.

After leaving the house, they walked leisurely towards the barn, little dreaming what a state of confusion their property was in—until Reddy rushed out of the tent, his jacket torn, his face bleeding, and his general appearance that of a boy who had been having rather a hard time of it.

Chapter XIX

THE SHOW BROKE UP

"WHY, what's the matter? Why don't you stay an' watch the animals?" asked Bob, in a tone intended to convey reproach and surprise that one of the projectors of the enterprise should desert his post of duty.

"Watch the animals?" screamed Reddy, in a rage; "you go an' watch 'em awhile instead of eatin' doughnuts, an' see how you like it. Mr. Stubbs's brother picked a hole in the bag so my cat got out, an' she jumped on the calf, an' he tore 'round awful till he let the hen an' Mrs. Simpson's cat loose, an' I got knocked down an' scratched, an' the whole show's broke up."

Reddy sat down on the ground, and wiped the blood from his face after he had

imparted the painful news; and all the party started for the tent as rapidly as possible.

It was a scene of ruin which they looked in upon after they had pulled aside Mr. Mansfield's flag, and one well calculated to discourage amateur circus proprietors.

Mr. Stubbs's brother was seated amid Reddy's paper and paint, holding the crowing hen by the head while he picked her wing-feathers out one by one. Mrs. Simpson's cat and kittens each had one of Bob's mice in its mouth, while Reddy's cat was chasing one of the squirrels with a murderous purpose. The calf was no longer an inmate of the tent; but a large rent in the canvas showed that he had opened a door for himself when the cat scratched him; and afar in the distance he could be seen, head down and tail up, as if fleeing from everything that looked like a circus.

The destruction was as complete as it could well have been made in so short a

time, and the partners were, quite naturally, discouraged. Toby retained sufficient presence of mind, amid the trouble, to rescue the crowing hen from the murderous clutches of Mr. Stubbs's brother, and the monkey scampered up the tent-pole, brandishing two or three of poor biddy's best and longest wing-feathers, while he screamed with satisfaction that he had accomplished at least a portion of the work of stripping the fowl.

"The show's broke up, an' that's all there's to it," said Bob, sorrowfully, as he gazed alternately at the hole in the canvas and his rapidly vanishing calf.

"Are the squirrels all gone?" asked Joe, driving the cat from her intended prey long enough to allow Master Bushy-tail to gain a refuge under the barn.

"Every one," replied Reddy. "The calf kicked the box over when he come towards me, an' it looked as if there was as many as a hundred come out jest as soon as the cover

was off. I could have caught one or two; but somehow Mrs. Simpson's cat got out of the basket jest then, an' she flew right on to my face."

The marks on Reddy's cheeks and nose told most eloquently with what force the cat "flew," and search was at once made for that pet of the Simpson family. She, with her kittens, had taken refuge under the barn as soon as the boys entered, and thus another trouble was added to the load the circus managers had to bear, for that cat must be returned to her mistress by night, or trouble might come of it.

The mice were entirely consumed, two tails alone remaining of what would have been shown to the good people of Guilford as strange animals from some far-off country.

The squirrels were gone, the calf had fled, the hen was in a thoroughly battered condition, and nothing remained of all that vast and wonderful collection of animals

except Mr. Stubbs's brother, and the rabbits, protected by the cage which their master's thoughtfulness had provided.

"I guess I'll take the rabbits home," said Leander, as he lifted the box to his shoulder. "It wouldn't do to have only them for animals, an' it hain't very certain how long they'll stay alive while that monkey's 'round."

"He's broke up the whole show, that's what he's done," and Ben shook his fist at Mr. Stubbs's brother, while he tried to soothe his half-plucked hen.

"What *are* we goin' to do?" asked Toby, almost in despair.

"I know what I'm goin' to do," said Ben, as he again placed the hen under the basket; "I'm goin' to crawl under the barn an' try to catch that cat, an' then I'm goin' home with my hen."

It seemed to be the desire of all the partners to get home with what remained of their pets, and as Ben went under the barn

on his hands and knees, Leander started off with his rabbits, Bob went to look for his calf, Reddy gathered up his bundle of paper, and Joe seized his pasteboard box, all going away where they could think over the ruin in solitude.

But high up on the post the cause of all this trouble chattered and scolded, while his master sat on the ground, looking at him as if he wondered whether or not it would ever be possible to reform such a monkey.

Chapter XX

ABNER'S DEATH

AFTER Toby was left alone in the tent, he remained for some time looking at the triumphant monkey, and listening to Ben's attempts to crawl around under the barn as fast as the cat could, when suddenly, as if such a thought had not occurred to him before, he cried out:

"Don't you want me to come an' help you, Ben?"

"You keep that monkey back, that's all the helpin' I want," Ben replied, almost sharply, and then the sounds indicated that the cat had suddenly changed her position to one farther under the barn, while the boy was trying to frighten her out.

"Give it up, Ben," shouted Toby, after waiting some time longer, and not seeing

any sign of success on the part of his friend. "If you come up here about dark you'll have a chance to catch her, for she'll have to come out for something to eat."

"You take the monkey into the house, an' I'll get along all right," was the almost savage reply. She smells him, an' jest as long as he's there she'll stay under here."

It seemed to Toby almost cruel to desert his friend and partner just at a time when he needed assistance; but he could do no less than go away, since he had been urged so peremptorily to do so, and, catching his pet without much difficulty, he carried Mr. Stubbs's brother away from the scene of the ruin he had caused.

Ben's remark, that the monkey had "broke the show all up," seemed to be very near the truth; for the boys would not think of going on with so small a number of animals; and, even if they decided to do without the menagerie, Bob's calf had

wrecked one side of the tent so completely that that particular piece of canvas was past mending.

"I don't know what we'll do," said Toby, mournfully, after he had finished telling the story to Aunt Olive. "The boys act as if they blamed me, because Mr. Stubbs's brother is so bad, and Joe's squirrels an' Bob's mice are all gone. Ben's hen don't look as if she'd ever 'mount to much, an' it don't seem to me that he can get Mrs. Simpson's cat an' every one of the kittens out from under the barn."

"Now don't go to worryin' about that, Toby," said Aunt Olive, as she patted him on the head, and gave him a large piece of cake at the same time. "You can get a dozen cats for Mrs. Simpson if she wants 'em; and as for mice, you tell Bob to set his trap out in the granary two or three times, an' he'll have as many as he can take care of. I'm glad the squirrels did get

away, for it seems such a sin to shut them up in a cage when they're so happy in the woods."

Toby was cheered by the very philosophical view that Aunt Olive took of the affair, and came to the conclusion that matters were not more than half so bad as they might have been.

"You be careful that your monkey don't get out again, an' go to cuttin' up as he did last night, for I shall get provoked with him if he hurts my ducks any more," and, with this bit of advice, Aunt Olive went up-stairs to see Abner.

Toby went out to the shed to assure himself that Mr. Stubbs's brother was tied so that he could not escape, and while he was there Uncle Daniel came in with an armful of strips of board.

"There, Toby, boy," he said, as he laid them on the floor, and looked around for the hammer and nails, "I'm going to build a pen for your monkey right up here in one

corner, so that we sha'n't be called up again in the night by a false alarm of burglars. Besides, it's almost time for school to begin again, an' I'm 'most too old to commence chasing monkeys around the country in case he gets out while you're away."

Had it been suggested the day before that Mr. Stubbs's brother was to be shut up in a cage, Toby would have thought it a very great hardship for his pet to endure; but the experience he had had in the last twenty-four hours convinced him that the imprisonment was for the best.

He helped Uncle Daniel in his labor to such purpose that, when it was time for him to go to the pasture, the cage was built, and Mr. Stubbs's brother was in it, looking as if he considered himself a thoroughly abused monkey, because he was not allowed to play just such pranks as had roused the household as well as broken up the circus scheme.

On his way to the pasture, Toby met Joe,

and the two had a long talk about the disaster of the afternoon. Joe believed that the enterprise must be abandoned—for that summer at least—as it would take them some time to repair the damage done, and his short experience in the business caused him to believe that they could hardly hope to compete with real circuses until they had more material with which to work.

Joe promised to see the other partners that evening or the next morning; and, if they were of the same opinion, the tent should be taken down and returned to its owner.

"Perhaps we can fix it all right next year, an' then Abner will be 'round to help," said Toby, as he parted with Joe that night; and thus was the circus project ended very sensibly, for the chances were that it would have been a failure if they had attempted to give their exhibition.

During that afternoon Toby had worried less about Abner than on any day since he

had been sick; he had felt that his friend's recovery was certain, and a load was lifted from his shoulders when he and Joe had decided regarding the circus; for, that out of the way, he could devote all his attention to his sick friend. Surely, with the ponies and the monkey they could have a great deal of sport during the two weeks that yet remained before school would begin, and Toby felt thoroughly happy.

But his happiness was changed to alarm very soon after he entered the house, for the doctor was there again, and, from the look on the faces of Uncle Daniel and Aunt Olive, he knew Abner must be worse.

"What is it, Uncle Dan'l? is Abner any sicker?" he asked, with quivering lip, as he looked up at the wrinkled face that ever wore a kindly look for him.

Uncle Daniel laid his hand affectionately on the head of the boy, whom he had cared for with the tenderness of a father since the day he repented and asked forgiveness

for having run away, and his voice trembled as he said:

"It is very likely that the good God will take the crippled boy to Himself to-night, Toby, and there in the heavenly mansions will he find relief from all his pain and infirmities. Then the poor-farm boy will no longer be an orphan or deformed, but, with his Almighty Father, will enter into such joys as we can have no conception of."

"Oh, Uncle Dan'l! must Abner really die?" cried Toby, while the great tears chased each other down his cheeks, and he hid his face on Uncle Daniel's knee.

"He will die here, Toby, boy, but it is simply an awakening into a perfect, glorious life, to which I pray that both you and I may be prepared to go when our Father calls us."

For some time there was silence in the room, broken only by Toby's sobs; and, while Uncle Daniel stroked the weeping

boy's head, the great white-winged messenger of God came into the chamber above, bearing away with him the spirit of the poor-farm boy.

THE END

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